The Camp Fire Girls in Glorious France

Margaret Vandercook

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Feb 28 / 1922

THE CAMP FIRE GIRLS IN GLORIOUS FRANCE

BY

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ILLUSTRATED

PHILADELPHIA

THE JOHN C. WINSTON CO.

PUBLISHERS

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STORIES ABOUT CAMP FIRE GIRLS

List of Titles in the Order of their Publication

THE CAMP FIRE GIRLS AT SUNRISE HILL—1913
THE CAMP FIRE GIRLS AMID THE SNOWS—1913
THE CAMP FIRE GIRLS IN THE OUTSIDE WORLD—1914
THE CAMP FIRE GIRLS ACROSS THE SEA—1914
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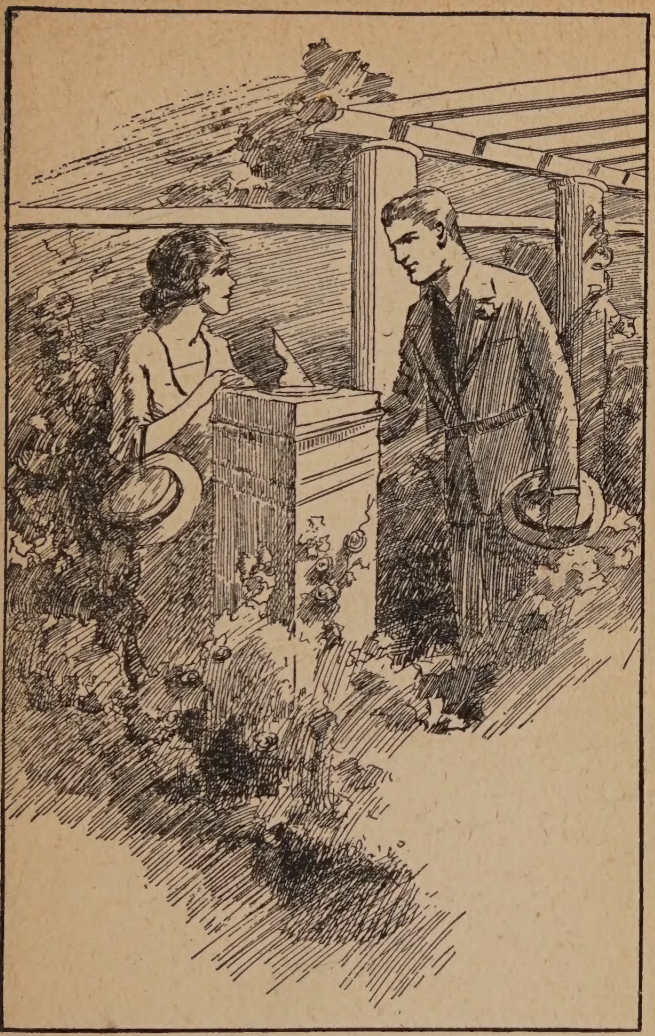

"Can't You Guess at Least Something of My Reason?"

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The Camp Fire Girls in Glorious France

CHAPTER I

A March Day

ONE afternoon in March, the windows of an old French farmhouse stood open, the curtains blowing in the breeze like white flags of truce, while from indoors came the murmur of a number of voices, girls' voices, gay and animated and speaking in English, not French.

The next moment there was a brief silence; afterwards one of them began singing, with an odd foreign accent, a song strange to hear in this French countryside, the song of an American camp fire:

"The fire of our camp is burning,
Sing sweet, sing low, sing far,
From the long, long trail returning
Led by the evening star.

"Bright is our fireside's glowing,
Sing sweet, sing low, sing high,
Fragrant the wind now blowing
Over the fields nearby.

"Pleasant shall be our resting,
Sing sweet, sing low, sing clear,
Others life's storms are breasting,
Ours is the home fire dear.

"Yet what is the night wind sighing?
Sing sweet, sing low, sing true,
The ill, the hungry and dying,
Are they not calling you?

"Back over the long trail moving,
Sing sweet, sing low, sing wide,
Following the law of loving,
France, we come to thy side!"

A murmur of applause, and then a group of girls in Camp Fire costumes stepped out of the house and into the front yard. The March afternoon was unusually warm with a flood of pale sunshine covering the landscape, the sky was a delicate blue, the clouds changing into fantastic shapes. Beyond, the open country was showing little patches of green in the upturned fields; on the branches of a few newly planted fruit trees were tiny buds.

"I want to congratulate you, Bettina, on your original Camp Fire song," one of the girls declared. She had dark hair with red lights in it, a slightly tanned skin, a little slender figure, as forceful and erect as a young boy's. Indeed both in her appearance and manner Mary Gilchrist gave one the impression at this time in her life that she possessed certain qualities of mind and character which are not supposed to be essentially feminine.

Bettina Graham, who was a tall, fair girl, older than her companion, smiled.

"It is good of you, Gill, to congratulate me, when I realize that you were longing to be outdoors and at work during all our Camp Fire ceremony. If there was any value in my song it was due to Yvonne's singing."

Standing close beside the two American girls was a young French girl who apparently had not heard their conversation. Her expression was troubled, there was a frown between her brows. It was as if she were listening, straining her ears for the sounds of battle which had been resounding through France for almost four years.

It was now the memorable spring of the year before the last desperate German drive and the final victory of the Allies.

Slipping her arm through Yvonne Fleury's, Bettina Graham made an effort to distract her attention.

"Try not to be unhappy, Yvonne. Even if the Germans are winning an unexpected success in Flanders, surely you cannot think they will ever reach the valleys of the Marne and Aisne a second time! I don't believe our work of reconstruction will go for nothing. Of course it is hard for you to be compelled to give up your brother after so brief a time together when for so long you had supposed him killed. Yet he has scarcely had opportunity to have rejoined his regiment at the front, since he was first to report at Soissons. We must do our best to continue our efforts here at our farmhouse on the Aisne until his return. Surely the war cannot last much longer!"

At this instant Bettina's conversation was interrupted.

"Behold a sight to banish all gloom!" exclaimed Mary Gilchrist, pointing over toward a field which adjoined the farmhouse yard.

There in truth was an amazing spectacle to be seen in a quiet French countryside!

Mounted upon an American tractor, which was ploughing vigorously through the earth, was an elderly American woman. She was wearing the usual blue blouse of the French peasant made slightly longer and showing underneath an unmistakable pair of full trousers of the same material. Upon her head was a large straw hat, tied under her chin with a bright red ribbon.

Forgetting their anxieties the three girls laughed in chorus.

"Count upon Miss Patricia Lord's doing and saying exactly what she pleases at any time or place," Mary Gilchrist continued. "As it happens I promised Miss Patricia to run our tractor over that particular field some time this afternoon, as soon as our Camp Fire ceremony closed. But you see she has preferred not to wait for me. In regard to her present costume, I heard Mrs. Burton say to Miss Patricia the other day that such a costume was not to be endured, France having already suffered enough without being compelled to behold Miss Patricia looking as she does at present. She even suggested

that the influence of our Camp Fire organization in this neighborhood might be affected if Miss Patricia persisted in wearing so ridiculous an outfit. Yet observe Miss Patricia! Recently she has been acting as if she intended to plow and sow every acre in the devastated regions of France within the next few weeks, as if actually she were racing with fate. I don't believe the German army itself will be able to stop her, certainly not for long. But I must go to fulfill my promise."

Concluding her speech, Mary Gilchrist left her two companions, and at the same time the two girls turned to greet a newcomer.

She was a woman between thirty and forty years of age, slender, with brilliant blue eyes and dark hair; seated in a wheeled chair she was evidently recovering from a serious illness. About her there was a look of extreme delicacy, nevertheless her expression was gay, almost challenging.

"Do please let me get out of this absurd chair at once," she demanded of the two girls who had charge of her. "After a little more of this I shall feel like a mummy! I

am just as well as I ever was before that small piece of German shell chose me for its victim and turned Aunt Patricia into a true prophet of evil. How persistently she did object to my journey into southern France! But what an exquisite afternoon! I think one never appreciates the true value of sunshine until one has been shut away from it. And how peaceful the French country about us seems! Surely the Germans will never again overrun this portion of France!"

To understand the present scene, one must know that a number of months before, Mrs. Richard Burton, the famous American actress, had arrived in one of the devastated districts of France near the river Aisne, bringing with her a group of American Camp Fire girls to help with the restoration work and also to originate the first Camp Fire organization among young French girls. Accompanying them was Miss Patricia Lord, an American spinster of great wealth.*

At the end of her speech, the Camp Fire guardian, arising from her chair, stood up a little shakily, resting her arm upon that of her niece, Peggy Webster.

*See "The Camp Fire Girls on the Field of Honor."

The young girl was like and at the same time unlike her, as she was the daughter of Mrs. Burton's twin sister.

At the present time Peggy was about eighteen years old, with vivid dark coloring, a short, straight nose and a firmly modeled chin.

There was a suggestion of splendid physical vitality in contrast with the older woman's frailty. Yet the woman and girl had the same look of a determined will hidden beneath natural sweetness and gaiety.

"Perhaps it may be as well for you not to recover too promptly, Tante. We may all be driven from this area of France as soon as you are strong enough to travel. I believe there is no reason for immediate anxiety, yet recently the news from the front is not encouraging. I believe the French authorities are beginning to feel it may be as well to send the women and children back from the Marne and Aisne a second time to some place of greater security. But I agree with you, the idea seems impossible. To think of the Germans again overrunning the dear little French

villages which have so recently been restored is a nightmare. Personally I won't even consider it. Suppose the Germans are enjoying another temporary success, they will be thrust back eventually."

As if anxious fully to absorb the beauty and tranquility of the scene about them, until they were really convinced that there was no further danger threatening the Allied lines in France, the Camp Fire guardian and the group of girls surrounding her remained silent a moment, after Peggy's speech.

Nevertheless, each one of them concealed a nervousness, impossible under the circumstances to confess.

Rumors, none of them especially reliable, but gaining strength through their number, had recently been reaching the Camp Fire farmhouse on the Aisne that the German attack against the British line further north was meeting with unexpected triumph. This did not mean that the victory would continue, or that the enemy would ever reach the neighborhood of the Aisne.

Yet each one of the present group of Camp Fire girls had lately faced this possibility.

Peggy's words may have been intended to reassure them as well as herself.

Perhaps with an effort to interrupt an unhappy train of thought, suddenly, with a smothered exclamation compounded of amusement and horror, Mrs. Burton pointed toward Miss Patricia Lord.

At the instant Miss Patricia was descending from her tractor and was soon standing in the center of her freshly plowed field. In this situation her costume appeared more remarkable than ever. Yet one had to accept the fact that it represented a new order of American service in France.

"What impression do you think our French neighbors receive of Aunt Patricia?" Mrs. Burton demanded. "I know most of them are puzzled by her and a few of them are genuinely afraid of her and yet she has accomplished more for their happiness in the last few months than half a dozen other persons. Yet she will wear the clothes she likes and she will not attempt to speak French that any human being can understand."

A little in the French fashion, since one

is apt to be influenced by the mannerisms about one, Mrs. Burton now shrugged her shoulders.

"At least, girls, you know no one can move Aunt Patricia!"

Talking without any special significance, the Camp Fire guardian had observed that Miss Lord and Mary Gilchrist were no longer standing alone in the freshly plowed field not far from the farmhouse yard.

Running toward them across the heavy furrows was old Jean, the French peasant who had been assisting Miss Patricia with the work of the farm.

A little in advance of him was a French boy of about fourteen.

Ordinarily old Jean's back was bent with age and long years of outdoor toil, yet at the present time he held himself nearly erect. He was panting and seemed nearly exhausted. The boy was running like a young race horse, and under the influence of an intense excitement.

Hearing their approach both Miss Patricia and Mary Gilchrist started toward them.

"Suppose we go and find out what news

old Jean is bringing us," Mrs. Burton suggested, her voice as controlled and quiet as usual. "He looks as if he had something important to say!"

As she was compelled to walk slowly and as the Camp Fire girls would not desert her, before they had gone any distance, Miss Patricia was seen to turn from old Jean and to come stalking toward them, followed by Mary Gilchrist.

She appeared like a general about to assume command of his troops.

"Polly Burton, within twenty-four hours you must be ready to leave our farmhouse and to take the Camp Fire girls with you. Jean has just arrived with the story that the Germans will soon begin an attack in this neighborhood. There is a possibility that they may push forward a certain distance. Personally I don't believe a word of it, yet I can't have you and a group of girls here on my hands. Besides, Jean says we are to have no choice. The French authorities insist that all women and girls, children and old men, move further back from the battle line.

"You will go first to Yvonne Fleury's

château, which is nearer the road to Paris. As Jean says there is no immediate danger, you will wait there for a few days until I can make arrangements to join you. If the Germans ever arrive at our farmhouse—and understand I don't believe for a moment this will occur—why they will find very little for their refreshment.

"I shall probably keep Vera Lagerloff here with me, as she is the most sensible of the Camp Fire girls. But, Polly Burton, will you kindly not stand there staring at me as if you did not grasp what I have just told you. I assure you the Germans are again laying waste this beautiful French country. It really seems to me that I cannot endure it."

And half leading, half carrying Mrs. Burton, Miss Patricia Lord entered the old French farmhouse.

CHAPTER II

The Château Yvonne

IT was night in the Château Yvonne. The old house was unlighted and extraordinarily still. Now and then from the recesses of a vine-covered wall, a screech owl sounded his lament, while from the banks of a small lake nearby a company of frogs croaked their approval.

Otherwise the château appeared deserted, and in the moonlight one could see that portions of it were in ruins and that only the oldest part, which originally had been built of stone, remained intact.

Nevertheless, at present the old château was not uninhabited. It was now after midnight and a figure, carrying a candle, moved through the wide hall of the second floor. So silently the figure moved that unless one were listening intently, one would have heard no footfall.

The apparition was a woman, with her hair bound in two long braids, her figure

slender and agile as a girl's. Yet she had a look of courage, of hardly fought anxiety, which, together with her delicacy, held no suggestion of youth.

As she entered one of the bedrooms, one saw that she was not alone in the old house, two girls lay asleep in a large, old-fashioned French bedstead, a third girl in a cot nearby.

Their sleep must have been partly due to exhaustion, because as the light of the candle flickered across their faces, no one of them spoke or stirred.

A moment later, slipping as noiselessly into a second room, there was a faint movement from one of a pair of sleepers. A girl's lips framed a question, but before the words were spoken the intruder had moved away.

Now she walked to the front of the house and stood before a tall French window whose shutters were tightly closed; through the slats came faint streaks of light.

She seemed to be hesitating. Then blowing out her candle and with difficulty opening one of the heavy shutters, she climbed out upon a small balcony. The balcony,

which was only a few feet in width, commanded an unusual view of the surrounding country.

As there were no large objects to obstruct the vision, one could see an extraordinary distance in the clear and brilliant moonlight. Not a single tree of any size guarded the old French château, although one might reasonably have expected to find it surrounded by a forest of a century's growth.

Only a few years before, the trees on this French estate had been famous throughout the countryside. An avenue of oaks bordering either side the road to the house had been half a mile in length and of great age and beauty. Strangers in the neighborhood were driven through the grounds of the château, chiefly that they might admire its extraordinary old trees.

Tonight, looking out from the little balcony down this selfsame avenue, one could see only a few gnarled trunks of the once famous trees, still standing like sentinels faithful at their posts till death.

When, soon after the outbreak of the European war the Germans swept across the Marne, the Château Yvonne and its

grounds had been made an object of their special mania for destruction. Such trees as had not been destroyed by bursting shells and poisonous gases they had deliberately set afire.

Yet at present, Mrs. Burton, as she stood on the little balcony and looked out over the country, was grateful for their loss. She was thus able to observe so much more of the surrounding landscape. There was no human being in sight.

For the past four days she and five of the Camp Fire girls had been in hiding in the Château Yvonne, and within these four days the face of the world seemed to have changed.

Already it has grown difficult for some of us to recall the last week in March in the year 1918, when the Germans again appeared to have a chance of victory and the Allied lines were seen to waver and then recede from northern to southern France.

It was within this fateful week, with the channel ports and Paris again threatened, that the Camp Fire guardian and her group of American girls, had been vainly awaiting at the Château Yvonne the arrival of Miss

Patricia Lord, Vera Lagerloff and Sally Ashton, in order that they might continue their retreat to Paris.

As Mrs. Burton now gazed out over the landscape, shining serenely in the clear beauty of the moonlight, she was interested in only two problems. What had become of Miss Patricia and her companions and how far away from the Château Yvonne at this hour was the German army?

In leaving the farmhouse on the Aisne and journeying to the château, instead of withdrawing from danger, they seemed to have approached nearer it. Yet no one possessed exact information concerning the results of the last few days of the great struggles. The persons admitted within the château had brought with them conflicting stories. One of them reported that the enemy was nearing Soissons, another that the French and American troops were holding the Germans at Château-Thierry. It was impossible to reach a definite decision. Yet always there was this conclusion. The French refugees were all hurrying on toward Paris; Mrs. Burton and her companions should join them at once.

Now as Mrs. Burton considered the situation for the hundredth time within the past twenty-four hours, she was as far from a conclusion as ever.

Against her will, but agreeing with Miss Patricia's wish, she had gone on ahead, Miss Patricia firmly declining to leave the farmhouse until her livestock and farming implements, acquired with such difficulty and of so great use to the French peasants, could be safely hidden from the approaching enemy.

At the time there had seemed no immediate danger to be feared. In proof of this Vera Lagerloff had not only remained behind, but by her own request, Sally Ashton, and Sally had always insisted that she was the least courageous of her group of Camp Fire girls.

Expecting to make the same journey later, now four days had passed without word of any kind from them.

There was the possibility that, upon learning there might be greater danger along the route which Mrs. Burton had traveled, Miss Patricia had decided to take some other road.

Yet considering this suggestion, again Mrs. Burton remained unconvinced. Miss Patricia Lord was a woman of her word; having told her to await her coming at the Château Yvonne, she would reach there finally if it were humanly possible. Otherwise Miss Patricia would fear that they might stay at the château indefinitely and so become involved in another tragedy of the Marne.

Finally, however, Mrs. Burton crouched down in the ledge of the window jutting out into the balcony. Having reached a halfway decision she at last could admit to herself her own fatigue.

In the morning the Camp Fire girls, who were her present companions, must start off alone toward Paris, leaving her at the château.

She could plead the excuse that she had become too exhausted to travel further until she had an opportunity to rest.

In the midst of her reflections, Mrs. Burton was even able to smile a little whimsically. Since the hour when Jean had brought the news of danger to the quiet farmhouse on the Aisne how com-

pletely she seemed to have ingored, if not to have forgotten, her own invalidism. And yet until that hour no one of her household had believed her equal to the least exertion!

Only a short time before, her husband, Captain Burton, had at last considered her to have grown sufficiently strong for him to leave, in order that he might continue his Red Cross work in France. And afterwards how strictly she had been guarded by Miss Patricia and the Camp Fire girls!

There is a familiar axiom that necessity knows no law. At present Mrs. Burton did not believe that she felt any the worse from her recent experiences save an increasing weariness.

The Camp Fire girls would undoubtedly oppose her wish to wait for Miss Patricia alone, she must therefore summon the strength to enforce her will.

The March winds were growing colder. At this moment, although wrapped in a heavy coat, Mrs. Burton shivered, partly with apprehension and partly from cold.

She knew that the five girls were not far off and yet, in the silence and loneliness of

the night, with no human being in sight, she suddenly felt desperately solitary.

She was frightened. Notwithstanding her fear was not so much for herself, though she dreaded being left perhaps to face an oncoming German horde, her greater fear was that the Camp Fire girls might meet with disaster, traveling without their guardian and with a horde of French refugees, toward greater security in Paris.

How greatly she longed at this moment for a sight of Miss Patricia Lord's gaunt and homely figure, always a tower of strength in adversity.

Yet not only was there no sign of her approach, there was an ominous quiet over the entire countryside.

"Mrs. Burton!"

The older woman started, a cold hand had touched her own and a girl, climbing through the window, sat beside her.

"Yvonne!"

Mrs. Burton's hand closed round Yvonne Fleury's.

Nearly four years before the young French girl, who was now a member of Mrs. Burton's Camp Fire, had been forced

to escape from her home during the first victory of the Germans along the Marne. In the flight her younger brother had been killed and her mother had afterwards died. Her older brother, Lieutenant Fleury, whom she afterwards believed to have been killed at the front, was at that time fighting with the French army.

Small wonder that tonight, Yvonne, perhaps facing another flight from her home, was unable to sleep.

"I must talk, Mrs. Burton, if you don't mind," she whispered. "I will disturb no one. Tell me you do not believe the Germans will cross the Marne a second time. If they do, nevertheless, I mean to stay on here at my home. I have just concluded to beg you and the Camp Fire girls to leave the château in the morning and go on with your journey to Paris. I will be here when Miss Patricia arrives to explain and later she can follow the route you will take. If my home is to be destroyed a second time I shall be here when the destruction takes place."

Understanding the young French girl's mood too well to argue with her at this moment, Mrs. Burton answered:

"Perhaps the situation is not so tragic as we fear, Yvonne. But in any case you must remember that your brother, Lieutenant Fleury, is again at the front fighting for the honor and glory of France. You cannot of your own choice add to his sorrows. Besides, you and I never doubt for a single moment that the Allies will ultimately win. Then you will have your home and your brother restored to you again!"

At present Mrs. Burton was able to say no more. At this moment toward the southeastern line of the horizon, suddenly the sky had become a flaring crimson. The next instant there followed the noise of an explosion and a sound of distant firing.

CHAPTER III

The Retreat

"AS soon as we finish breakfast I think it wiser that you girls make your arrangements to start on toward Paris at once."

In the old kitchen of the French château the Camp Fire girls were seated about an ancient oak table, eating as quietly as if nothing had occurred to disturb them in the night.

The noise of the firing, which had interrupted Mrs. Burton's and Yvonne's conversation, had not lasted long, and no one knew from what source it had come, whether the Germans were making a surprise attack nearby, or the allied troops repulsing one.

At dawn, hearing a knocking at the kitchen door, Mrs. Burton had admitted an old French peasant woman and her small grandson. At present they were having their breakfast of coffee and bread in a corner of the big kitchen, having preferred

not to sit at the table. With them they had brought the news that the Germans had endeavored to cross the river about ten miles from the Château Yvonne, but had been driven back. Also they reported that the roads were becoming constantly more crowded with refugees, and as soon as they had a little food and rest they wished to journey on.

Following her demand, a little to the Camp Fire guardian's surprise, no dissenting voice greeted her.

Instead Alice Ashton replied immediately:

"I entirely agree with you, Tante. The sooner all of you make the effort to reach Paris the better under the present conditions. I am afraid your strength will not hold out if you continue waiting much longer in this uncertainty. You understand that I cannot go with you. I must stay here until Sally arrives with Aunt Patricia, if they ever do arrive. Sally is younger than I am and not able to take care of herself in an emergency, so that if anything happened to her I should always feel responsible. I see now that to have

allowed her to remain behind with Aunt Patricia and Vera was madness, and yet no one could have anticipated the turn events have recently taken. Still, in coming to France during war times each one of us understood the possibility of danger. During our work at our farmhouse on the Aisne we had a much quieter experience than any of us anticipated!"

Alice's speech had made an impression upon her small audience, notwithstanding, Mrs. Burton shook her head.

"Sorry I can agree with only a part of what you have just said, Alice. You *must* go on to Paris with the other girls. I will stay on here to wait for Aunt Patricia, Sally and Vera. I shall be in no especial danger, unless the fighting actually reaches this château, which I doubt. But with you girls here with me the situation would be utterly different. Never so long as I live would I wish to face a member of your families. I know now that I should never have brought you with me to France until the war was actually ended! Personally I shall prefer staying on here for a few days to rest."

Mrs. Burton now turned directly to Yvonne Fleury.

"Yvonne, I have not forgotten what you told me last night, nevertheless, you must go on to Paris. Remember the other girls need you to act as their guide, as you alone know the roads in this part of the country. It may be that after you have motored some of the way you may be able to board a train, so that you will reach Paris more quickly. I don't know, I must leave details of the journey to your judgment. Some day, Mary Gilchrist, I intend writing your father what his gift of a motor to you has meant to us here in France.

"Also I think he need no longer regret having had no son to send to France; no one could have accomplished more useful work than you in these past few months, or handled a car more successfully."

As she finished her suggestions, which she had made as casual and matter of fact as possible, Mrs. Burton half rose from the tall wooden stool, which was serving as her resting place, only to be drawn back again by Peggy Webster, who laid a firm hold on her."

"Don't talk nonsense, Tante!" Peggy remarked coolly, although not with marked respect. "You know I would just as soon march out boldly and alone to meet the advancing German army as to leave you here in the château by yourself to await Miss Patricia's coming. As a matter of fact all of us realize she may never reach here. There is no use avoiding the truth that there is every possibility the road may be cut off. Besides, you speak of the impossibility of your facing our families if misfortune should overtake one of us. Please think of the situation for me if I should some day have to confess to my mother that I had left you alone and ill, utterly deserted by all of us, to meet whatever may come. You are not well enough to be alone even under ordinary circumstances."

Peggy Webster possessed certain obstinate characteristics of her father. Many years before when they were both young, Mrs. Burton and Mr. Webster had known each other intimately and been eternally at war.

Therefore, Mrs. Burton was secretly a

little amused and a little annoyed at this moment by the firmness of Peggy's crimson lips, the single frowning line that appeared between her dark level brows. Moreover, she knew that at present she had neither strength nor time for argument with her niece.

"We must either decide it is wisest for us all to leave here for Paris, or all to remain here," Bettina Graham added at this instant. "Certainly, Tante, no one of us will consider going on without you, or even leaving just one of us here to face the situation with you. It is my opinion that the way to meet the present difficulty is to meet it together. Our chief trouble now is, not so much our own danger, as our uncertainty and worry over Aunt Patricia, Vera and Sally. It seems to me our original mistake was ever to have separated; either we should have waited with them at the farmhouse until we could have started off together, or insisted they come here to the château with us."

Not alone was Bettina Graham's opinion of influence among her group of Camp Fire associates, ordinarily Mrs. Burton was also

equally responsive to it, Bettina possessing an unusual nature, a high sense of honor, unselfishness and above all else good breeding. And these characteristics were not due only to her parentage and training, but to something innate in the girl herself.

Yet this instant, and in spite of Peggy's restraining hand, Mrs. Burton managed to rise from her place.

The next, she stood quietly facing the group of girls, who were gazing as intently upon her. And upon each face the Camp Fire guardian read the strongest spiritual opposition to her recent suggestion.

During the night Mrs. Burton had slept very little, she was now feeling more exhausted than she cared to confess. Nevertheless, she faced her present task with the courage and calmness characteristic of her in important moments.

Dressing had always been something of an art with Mrs. Burton, even in the days when as a girl, she, as Polly O'Neill, had little money to spend. Since that time Mrs. Burton had apologized for herself by declaring that clothes must do for her what natural beauty accomplished for other

women. They must divert attention from her natural plainness.

But whether or not this were true, and most persons would not have agreed with her, Mrs. Burton always dressed with exquisite care.

This morning, even under the present trying conditions, her hair was as carefully arranged, her blue serge costume fitted with the same neatness and simplicity. Only her face revealed her fatigue and anxiety.

Nevertheless, as she stood gazing at her group of Camp Fire girls with a mixture of appeal and authority, some quality in her expression gave her a charm few persons ever possessed, a charm which had been partly responsible for her remarkable success as an actress. At present her eyes were very blue and determined, her mouth revealed both strength and tenderness.

"I am sorry," she began, "perhaps you girls do not agree with me, perhaps it may be many years before you will understand what motive is back of my present decision. I cannot argue or explain to you now. Only by noon you must be prepared to leave here for Paris and for me to stay behind. I

insist upon it. In the years I have been your Camp Fire guardian I don't think I have often attempted to use my authority, or to follow any plan which has not met with your approval. But today I intend doing both those things. I will give you all the instructions I can and a letter to Senator Georges Duval. When you reach Paris he will see that you find a proper place to live. You will wait there until the rest of us either join you, or let you hear what to do next. Now we have already spent too much time in discussion, please get ready at once!"

As she concluded there was a finality in Mrs. Burton's tones which few persons were ever able to disregard.

Moreover, she turned at once and left the room.

After she had gone the Camp Fire girls remained silent a moment and then Mary Gilchrist gave a despairing shrug to her shoulders.

"Well, at least I have no choice, if you girls are to go to Paris I must go with you to drive our motor. Yvonne, I think you are in the same situation that I am. We

shall need you to tell us about the roads. Whatever the others think wisest I am willing to do. But assuredly I don't believe we ought to leave Mrs. Burton here alone, and just as certainly I don't see how we are to take her with us, unless we decide to do it by force."

Peggy Webster, who, since the beginning of her aunt's speech, had sat with her eyes downcast and her cheeks flushed, now leaned forward resting her elbows on the table.

"Girls, please listen and help me," she pleaded. "It is my judgment that the rest of you must start for Paris, but that I must remain here. Tante will not go with us, or change her decision. I have known her all my life. At times she seems easily influenced, at others she is absolutely immovable. This is one of the times. So I must pretend that I mean to accompany you, I must make my preparations just as the rest of you will do, and at the last moment trust to some sudden inspiration which will allow me to stay behind. There is even the possibility that Aunt Patricia and Sally and Vera may appear before

noon, though I confess I have not much faith in the idea. Recently, watching for their coming, I have felt a little like Sister Anne in the story of Bluebeard."

At this moment Peggy attempted to laugh, although her merriment was not a conspicuous success.

Immediately after, without questioning Peggy Webster's conclusion, the Camp Fire girls set about their preparations to join the groups of refugees, now retreating for the second time toward Paris.

There was not a great deal to be accomplished.

They had brought with them from their farmhouse on the Aisne only a few essential things, and no one had completely unpacked.

Fortunately, Yvonne Fleury had stored away at her home, not only sufficient food for their stay at the Château Yvonne, but enough to take with them whatever was required for the journey to Paris.

For two hours the girls worked industriously, Mrs. Burton assisting them in every possible way and never again referring to her own intention not to accompany them.

Only once for a few moments she had a short talk with her niece.

"I know, Peggy, that these are the days when everybody offers the most excellent advice to everybody else, so I suppose I am no exception. But please promise me not to worry about me, or to think of me, until we see each other in Paris. Then I shall be happy to receive any attention you wish to bestow upon me. In all probability the French and American troops will never allow the enemy to reach this neighborhood and I shall enjoy the rest here alone. But if anything occurs you are to tell my husband and your mother that it was my usual obstinacy which forced you girls to make this dangerous trip alone. By the way the old French peasant woman who came in this morning has promised to stay here with me if you will take her little grandson with you and see that no harm comes to him. So you see I shall be perfectly well looked after."

"Yes," Peggy answered non-committally, and went her way.

A little before noon Mary Gilchrist drove her motor car into a courtyard behind the French château.

The courtyard was built of stone.

On the further side a narrow road led on to the main one, which further on connected with the road to Paris.

A few moments after, the five Camp Fire girls came out of the house dressed for the journey. They wore their Camp Fire traveling costumes especially designed for their new service in France.

Mrs. Burton accompanied them, but there was nothing in her appearance or manner to suggest that she had changed her decision and intended to go on with them to Paris.

When four of the girls climbed into the motor, she stood nearby talking to them. Peggy Webster was only a few feet away, making no effort to enter, and yet with her preparations for the trip as complete as any one else.

"This is not goodbye, girls, merely the French adieu! Really I suppose both the farewells mean 'God be with you till we meet again.' As for me I shall see you soon, along with Aunt Patricia, Sally and Vera. Afterwards we shall remain in Paris until the Allies win the war. This cannot be

far off, this temporary German success is the last flare of a dying fire. Come, Peggy dear, let me help you climb in."

Mrs. Burton's manner was persistently, almost annoyingly cheerful, though no one of her companions responded to it in the least degree.

"I suppose you might as well know the truth now, Tante," Bettina Graham announced. "No one of us has ever meant to allow you to be here alone at the château. We have merely decided that Peggy is your niece and so has a greater right to stay than the rest of us. Goodbye, Peggy. If we hear you and Tante are in special danger we may return to you!"

Like many another person Mrs. Burton had believed in her own triumph before her battle had been finally won.

Now she walked over and put her hand on Peggy Webster's shoulder.

"Come, dear, I think you understand I mean to be obeyed."

Silently two pairs of eyes gauged each other, while two wills fought for supremacy.

But who would have conquered in the end no one was ever to find out.

At this instant there was an unexpected noise in the narrow road behind the courtyard of the château.

Forgetting Peggy for the moment, Mrs. Burton ran toward the gate which led from the courtyard into the road. For the moment she seemed to have lost courage. Few persons in the neighborhood had known of their presence in the Château Yvonne for the past few days.

She felt a sudden premonition of evil. Who could be appearing at this hour to interrupt the effort of the Camp Fire girls to reach Paris in safety?

Mrs. Burton stepped out into the road with Peggy Webster following close behind her.

A cavalcade seemed to be approaching them. Yet there was nothing to suggest danger.

Nevertheless, the spectacle they now beheld was startling even in war times.

A pair of heavy cart horses were moving up the road, drawing a large farm wagon.

Two cows, laden like beasts of burden and hitched to the wagon, were coming on behind.

On the front seat of the wagon was a tall, gaunt spinster, an old man and a boy. Miss Patricia Lord was driving.

Inside the wagon, surrounded by bundles and boxes of varying sizes, were two girls, Sally Ashton and Vera Lagerloff.

As the wagon drew near, Miss Patricia Lord stood up and began waving a long stick.

"Polly Burton, why are you and the Camp Fire girls not already on the road toward Paris? Perhaps you have not heard the Germans are breaking through at different points all along the Allied line! I will give you just five minutes to be ready to go on with us!"

CHAPTER IV

The Road to Paris

WITH so extraordinary a combination of vehicles the journey of the Camp Fire girls and their guardians to Paris became necessarily a slow and frequently interrupted one.

In contrast with a recently built American motor car, Miss Patricia's present equipage suggested nothing more modern than Noah and his admirable Ark.

Yet the two groups of friends and refugees wished to keep within reasonable distance of each other. They both appreciated that if ever they were separated for any distance, they might never be able to make connections again.

The roads were becoming constantly more crowded with an increasing stream of vehicles and travelers afoot, yet among them all no equipage was so remarkable as Miss Patricia's, or excited more interest.

Upon leaving the Château Yvonne, a

quarter of an hour after Miss Patricia's belated arrival, there had been opportunity for only a hastily arranged program.

At that time the plan had been for Mary Gilchrist, following Yvonne Fleury's instructions, to drive straight ahead. At any point in the road, where a change of direction should be made, or any special instruction given, Mary was to draw her car aside out of the way of the other vehicles, there to await Miss Patricia's slower approach.

The program possessed a good many obvious weaknesses and yet in the few moments at their disposal before their departure, no one of the Camp Fire party had a better plan to suggest.

Rather surprisingly well it succeeded in the beginning.

Even without the knowledge of Miss Patricia's clumsy caravan in the background, Mary Gilchrist would not have been able to drive rapidly.

When her car reached the main road, it was found to be not merely filled with refugees seeking safety further behind the line. Reinforcements were being rushed from the opposite direction to stem the German tide.

Advancing slowly the Camp Fire automobile took its place in the long line of other vehicles. Now and then this line was halted by an officer, when heavier trucks and wagons were to be allowed to pass.

Finally, at a convenient crossroad, where she did not interfere with the other traffic, Mary halted.

Within less than half an hour Miss Patricia reached them. There she insisted upon alighting, ostensibly to make certain inquiries and to offer her usual advice, but in reality to discover the state of Mrs. Burton's health. No one was in the least deceived.

However, as Mrs. Burton insisted she was bearing the journey remarkably well and was far more interested than frightened and that the Camp Fire girls were in the same state of mind, Miss Patricia returned to her wagon and the pilgrimage was resumed.

Toward late afternoon, the effort at a second reunion was less successful.

It was now between four and five o'clock. A great wave of weariness and depression appeared to be engulfing not only the Camp

Fire travelers, but the entire band of French refugees.

When they spoke at all to one another, it was only to tell some depressing story. Surely the Germans would capture Paris with this latest victorious assault. Some one reported that the Germans had perfected a long-range gun which would bombard Paris at a distance of seventy miles.

The Camp Fire girls became subject to the same state of despondency. They talked very little; moreover, it was plain to all of them that Mrs. Burton was reaching the end of her reserve strength. Some time before, she had ceased to have anything to say.

Without discussing the question, each one of the girls now understood that they could not travel much further until morning. Some arrangement must shortly be made for the night.

At five o'clock Mary Gilchrist and Yvonne Fleury, who were on the front seat of the motor, discovered a small private road which led from the main road into the yard of a small cottage. Here they concluded to await the second coming of Miss Patricia.

Mrs. Burton they established on the tiny veranda in the front of the house, to rest and at the same time to watch for the approach of the others, while the girls went to make investigations. The house they had chosen seemed to be entirely deserted.

Too tired to care what was going on about her, for some time Mrs. Burton sat huddled in her heavy fur coat. She was too exhausted even to care what became of herself or of anyone else.

At first she scarcely noticed that the Camp Fire girls had left her a long time alone, or that Miss Patricia had failed to appear. But when more than half an hour went by she began to feel nervous.

One could readily imagine that Miss Patricia's collection of farm animals might have given out from their long march and be unable to continue the journey.

Mrs. Burton also began to worry over Sally Ashton and Vera. She had not been able to exchange a word with either of them on their arrival at the château, and knew nothing of their experiences in the last few days since they had said goodby at the farmhouse on the Aisne.

The March winds were growing piercingly cold now that the sun was dying down. Still the little groups of refugees kept moving on past the yard of the cottage where Mrs. Burton sat waiting.

Finally the travelers seemed to be growing fewer in number; they too must have become exhausted by their long pilgrimage and be taking shelter or else resting along the roadside.

Stiff from the cold and having remained seated so long, as no one of the Camp Fire girls came back to join her, Mrs. Burton at length rose and walked out of the yard of the cottage toward the main road. It might be possible that catching sight of Miss Patricia's approach she would be relieved of her anxiety.

After strolling on for a few yards, Mrs. Burton observed a crowd of refugees who must have halted to rest. They were seated in small groups along either side of the road. Drawing nearer, Mrs. Burton saw that their faces wore that look of patient endurance, which in the past few months she had witnessed so many times in the faces of the French peasants. They were not

uncheerful, now that they were resting. Eating their evening meal life seemed to hold out fresh hope. After all, had they not been assured that the United States was each day landing thousands of fresh troops in France? Soon the enemy would be driven out of France forever!

Then, a little further on, Mrs. Burton beheld a familiar and well beloved figure.

Passing between the groups of refugees, most of them old men and women who had been traveling on foot, pushing perambulators or else drawing wagons laden with tiny children or their few household possessions, marched Miss Patricia Lord.

She appeared to be dispensing food to her fellow travelers, as on one arm she was carrying a large pail and on the other a basket.

Discovering Mrs. Burton she set both the pail and the basket down in the middle of the road and strode forward, and for once in her life Miss Patricia appeared apologetic.

"Polly, my dear, forgive me for keeping you waiting so long. I hope you are not utterly worn out; I am extremely worried

about you and yet I could not resist what I am doing at present. I have had no opportunity to tell you that I brought away with me from our farmhouse nearly all the food supply we had in our possession. It was my intention then to feed as many refugees as possible along the road to Paris. I presume I should have thought of you first, but I believed you would feel obliged to wait for me somewhere and that you had journeyed far enough for today. Come with me."

Meekly following Miss Patricia, who had by this time picked up her now empty basket and pail, Mrs. Burton walked on a few yards more.

In a little patch of grass, springing up near the roadside under the few warm rays of the March sun, Mrs. Burton found old Jean, the French peasant, milking one of Miss Patricia's cows. Beside him and engaged in a similar occupation was a young French boy.

Drawn up out of the way of the other vehicles, that were still passing along the main road, Miss Patricia's horses and wagon were waiting. Standing beside the wagon,

was Vera Lagerloff. She was bestowing a small package of food upon anyone who requested it, but at the same time keeping careful watch on the main supply.

Not until a second glance, did Mrs. Burton discover what had become of Sally Ashton. Then she saw Sally standing listlessly a few feet away, making no effort to help either Vera or Miss Patricia and scarcely appearing to notice the people about her.

As her Camp Fire guardian approached, Sally tried to express a proper degree of enthusiasm and affection, yet Sally's appearance frightened and puzzled Mrs. Burton.

She did not look at her directly, yet one could see that the expression of her eyes had changed. They had lost their childish look of dreaming and were wide open and startled. Her face had ceased to possess its former softly rounded curve and there were tiny hollows in her cheeks and lines about her mouth.

"Sally, I am tired, won't you come with me? I do not feel strong enough to walk alone. The other girls and I have found a

little cottage not far away which we think deserted. I believe we had best spend the night there. We are all too weary to go on any further and besides, darkness will be upon us in another hour. I will explain to Aunt Patricia, and she and Vera will join us later when they have finished feeding the little multitude."

After a few words of explanation to Miss Patricia, Sally and Mrs. Burton went on toward the abandoned cottage, neither of them attempting any conversation.

Approaching them a few yards from the house were Alice Ashton and Bettina Graham. At once Alice took charge of her sister and Bettina of their Camp Fire guardian.

Both girls reported that the house they had discovered was entirely abandoned and that they had taken possession of it for the night. Supper was ready and waiting.

An hour after the entire party was asleep.

CHAPTER V

Armistice Day in Paris

IT was shortly before eleven o'clock on the morning of November eleventh when the bells of Paris began pealing.

The following instant a group of young American girls who had been seated about a tiny fire in a large, bare room, jumped hurriedly to their feet.

"It has come at last, the Germans have signed the armistice! *Vive la paix!*" one of them exclaimed.

Her words were almost drowned in the noise of the firing of guns, the thunder of cannon, noises to which Paris had been listening for the past four years in bitterness, but which she now heard with rejoicing.

"Let us start out at once, Aunt Patricia, to take part in the celebration before the streets become too crowded," Peggy Webster suggested. "What luck to be in Paris today! I should rather be here than in

any city in the world at the present time, for surely the city which has suffered most through the war must rejoice most!"

As she finished speaking, Peggy walked over to a window and flung it open. Already they could hear the sounds of cheering. Below Peggy could see people running into the street, windows of other houses being thrown open. Voices were calling, vive, vive everything, except, "*la guerre.*"

"Isn't it a pity Tante is not with us? We shall miss her more than ever today," Bettina added. "Yet I am glad she is not too ill to feel the deepest thankfulness even if she cannot take part in the celebration and we may manage to see her later this afternoon. Aunt Patricia, do you feel equal to going with us? The crowds may make you overtired. Don't worry, we promise to be as careful as possible, but do let us hurry. I feel as if I could scarcely bear the four walls of a house ten minutes longer. I want to shout, weep, laugh over victory. Glorious France, how much she has suffered and how much she has won!"

"Nevertheless, Bettina Graham, there is no reason to talk in such a high-flown fash-

ion," Miss Patricia Lord returned, "as if you were making a speech on one of the boulevards. I think we had better be saying our prayers. Just the same please be quiet a moment while I try to think; the noise outside is sufficient without your increasing it. I am afraid it will not be safe for you Camp Fire girls to go out into the streets for at least another twenty-four hours. But most certainly I shall go, however, I will return as promptly as possible to let you know what I have seen."

At this instant Miss Patricia removed the large horned spectacles, through which she had been reading the morning paper, and wiped the moisture from them carefully. She then wiped her eyes, but entirely unconscious of what she was doing.

Nevertheless, she may have remained unaware of the expressions upon the faces of the half dozen girls who were her present companions.

At this moment an arm encircled her waist.

"Really, truly, Aunt Patricia, you don't think we can stay indoors when all the rest of Paris is rejoicing? You wouldn't

be so cruel as to ask it of us, you who have preached courage in the time of war, would not have us turn cowards with the approach of peace?"

And Mary Gilchrist looked imploringly into Miss Patricia's fine eyes, wise enough not to appear to notice their unusual moisture.

"You come with us, Aunt Patricia, and I think we shall manage to keep together and not to lose either our heads or our way. Remember we made a safe retreat to Paris when the Huns believed they were soon to follow after us and take possession of the city.

As Mary Gilchrist had just announced, it was true that a number of months before, after an arduous retreat, first from their farmhouse on the Aisne and later from the Château Yvonne, the Camp Fire girls and their guardians had arrived safely in Paris. During the following summer months they had lived in a French pension not far from the Place de la Concorde, while the long range German guns vainly endeavored to frighten the city with a sense of her impending doom.

At present neither Mrs. Burton nor Sally Ashton was with their Camp Fire group in the pension. Soon after their arrival, not having recovered sufficiently from her wound to endure the long strain and fatigue of the retreat, Mrs. Burton had again been seriously ill. By her surgeon's advice she had been removed to a hospital nearby, where she had been for the past few months, and although by this time a great deal better, she had not yet rejoined her friends.

Sally Ashton, without appearing to be actually ill and indeed always denying every suggestion of illness, had never from the day of the retreat from the farmhouse been like her former self. Six weeks before, influenced more by Miss Patricia's wish than the doctor's orders, she had departed for rest and quiet to a little house in the country a few hours journey from town.

At this moment, following Mary Gilchrist's words, the Camp Fire girls formed an imploring circle about their chaperon, Miss Patricia Lord, who, in Mrs. Burton's absence, had no one to dispute her authority.

Never to appear actually to oppose Miss Patricia, the girls had learned to be the better part of wisdom, therefore the present moment was fraught with danger. To disobey Miss Patricia's wish, which might at any moment be translated into a command, would be disagreeable and perchance succeeded by uncomfortable consequences. However, not to see Paris in her carnival of joy and to share in the celebration was not to be considered.

And in all probability Miss Patricia had always appreciated this fact.

"Oh, very well," she conceded with unexpected suddenness, "and do get ready as soon as possible. I have only to put on my bonnet. In truth I have been prepared for this moment ever since our arrival in France. Have I not always insisted that victory was always a mere question of time!"

A few moments later the throngs in the streets of Paris were increased by the presence of the half dozen American Camp Fire girls and Miss Lord.

Perhaps not much more than a half an hour had passed since the announcement of

the signing of the armistice and yet already a multitude had appeared out of doors. Paris was happy and expressing her happiness as only Paris can.

The air was filled with cheers, with snatches of songs, not so frequent the "Marseillaise," as "Madelon," the song of the poilus, since it was the French soldier who had brought victory to glorious France.

Through the crowds Miss Patricia engineered the way, Yvonne Fleury clinging to one arm, Mary Gilchrist to the other, while behind them followed Vera Lagerloff and Alice Ashton and next came Bettina Graham and Peggy Webster.

As the crowd in their neighborhood was moving toward the Place de la Concorde there was no choice but to move with it.

In the Place de la Concorde, filled with statues commemorative of French history, the girls observed a vast mass of waving flags. Here all the trophies of war had been placed. Soldiers and young girls were climbing on the big guns, shouting, laughing, kissing one another.

Save for Miss Patricia's leadership the Camp Fire girls would never have moved

on with so little difficulty. Like a happy grenadier she marched with her head up and her old eyes flashing. France had no greater admirer than the elderly American spinster.

A French soldier, leaning over to kiss Mary Gilchrist, who was gazing upward and unconscious of him, found Miss Patricia's hand suddenly interposed between his lips and Mary's face. Being a Frenchman, he had the grace gallantly to kiss Miss Patricia's hand and then to march off laughing at the joke on himself.

Finally the little group of Americans found themselves in a temporary shelter near the statue of Alsace-Lorraine in the Place de la Concorde. From the close of the Franco-Prussian war this statue of an heroic figure of a woman, representing the lost provinces, had been draped in mourning. Today the mourning had been torn away and the statue smothered in flowers.

It chanced that Bettina Graham and Peggy Webster were crowded close against the railing surrounding the statue.

"Peggy," Bettina whispered, "I want to add my little tribute to France's victory

after forty years of waiting for the return of her provinces. I have nothing to offer but this little bunch of violets I have been wearing all morning. And certainly they are a faded tribute! Still there is no chance of getting any other flowers today."

"Oh, never mind, it is the sentiment after all, isn't it, Bettina? The tribute is no tinier than the effort we Camp Fire girls have been making in the last year to help France. It is simply that we have given all we had to give," Peggy returned.

While she was speaking, Bettina had unfastened a large bunch of Roman violets, which she was wearing at her waist, and was leaning over the railing trying to find a place for her small bouquet. At the same instant a hand, holding an enormous bunch of red and white roses encircled with deep blue forget-me-nots, was thrust above her head.

Flushing at the contrast, Bettina hurriedly dropped her violets and glanced upward.

Behind her was a young man, evidently an American, although not a soldier, as he was not wearing a uniform.

"I beg your pardon, I hope I have not interfered with you," an American voice apologized.

But before Bettina was able to do more than shake her head, there was an unexpected movement in the crowd and she and Peggy were again pushed onward.

A few feet ahead Miss Patricia was looking back and signaling. They could see that a girl had been lifted on the shoulders of two soldiers. The crowd was now following them.

When the girl began singing, the crowd became quieter. Her voice was clear and beautiful; she was singing the "Marseillaise," then snatches of Allied songs.

Evidently the girl, whom the soldiers were bearing along in triumph, was some celebrated artist, who was giving the best she had to give to the people as her tribute to France. And the crowd now and then sang with her, whatever words of whatever national song they knew.

Finally toward dusk, the Camp Fire girls and Miss Patricia found themselves returning to the neighborhood of their pension. Lights were beginning to shine along the

boulevards, when Paris until tonight had been in darkness for nearly four long years.

At a street corner where the crowd had thinned, Miss Patricia waited with Yvonne and Myra until the other four girls had caught up with them.

"You girls, can make your way home from here alone, can't you?" she inquired. "I really must see Polly Burton before this day is past. I must say a few words to her else I shall never feel the day's celebration has satisfied me."

"Of course, Aunt Patricia, but since we all feel exactly as you do, why not let us go with you?" Peggy answered.

Soon after the Camp Fire girls and Miss Lord found Mrs. Burton seated by a window in her hospital bedroom, holding a little book in her hand and, except that she was pale from the excitement of the day, looking extraordinarily well.

"Oh, I never, never, never have been so glad to see people before!" she cried, jumping up and embracing Miss Patricia. "If you only knew what it has meant to stay here in a hospital with my nose glued against the window pane, when all the world is

going mad with joy, you would be truly sorry for me. I think I should have tried to make my escape, if my doctor had not telephoned me I was not think of going out for a moment. I suppose, Aunt Patricia, you managed to telephone him this instruction last night because you imagined the armistice would be signed today. But please everybody tell me at once just what you have seen and done."

A quarter of an hour later, when the Camp Fire girls had grown silent through sheer fatigue, Miss Patricia said with unusual gentleness:

"Well, Polly, I am sorry you could not be with us today, although I did tell the doctor that he was not to allow you to go out for a moment under any circumstances. What have you been doing with your time?"

Mrs. Burton held up her book.

"Perhaps you could never guess! I have been reading a one-act play by France's great Premier, Clemenceau. Did you know the old warrior statesman was a poet as well? His play is called 'Le Voile du Bonheur,' 'The Veil of Happiness.' It is the story of an old blind Chinese poet who

is happy in the love of his wife and son and the devotion of his friends. I wish I knew French sufficiently well to be able to act in it. One day the old poet's poems are recognized by his Emperor and he is told he may have any gift. He asks for the release of a friend who is a prisoner. Then the old man falls asleep and in his sleep his sight is restored. He wakens to find the friend he has released from prison trying to rob him, his wife loving some one else and his son mocking at his affliction. And in the end the poet prays to have his blindness restored that he may return to happiness. It is a melancholy little play. I have been hoping all day the world may never wish to be blind again."

Getting up Mrs. Burton began walking up and down her little room, and a moment later, coming up behind Miss Patricia, suddenly put both hands on the older woman's shoulders, resting her cheek on her hair.

"Aunt Patricia, none of us can leave France now the armistice is signed until peace is declared. Surely all of you feel as I do; we who have seen France in her suffering must remain here during her great

release. I presume the peace commission will hold its sessions in Paris; no other city is apt to be chosen."

Miss Patricia nodded.

"For once in my life, Polly my dear, I agree with you. Indeed ever since there has been a possibility of an armistice I have been thinking over what you have just said! We may be making a mistake, nevertheless, I am reasonably sure that Paris will be chosen as the place of meeting for the Peace delegates. Under the circumstances I have just rented a furnished house in Versailles for the next six months. Paris will soon grow too crowded to contain unnecessary women. Moreover, Versailles is near enough to Paris for us to enjoy whatever takes place here and will also be better for our health and our nerves."

CHAPTER VI

Versailles

ON an afternoon in February, two months later, two girls were walking together in the most beautiful and perhaps the most historically romantic garden in the world, the garden of Versailles.

They had followed the long avenues known as the "Avenues of the Seasons" and in French, as Allée de l'Eté, Allée de l'Automme, Allée de l'Hiver and Allée du Printemps, and were now seated on a small bench at the end of the Allée du Printemps, facing a fountain.

The fountain was not playing at the present time, and yet it must have been in action not long before. A little fringe of ice appeared at the edges of the great basin, while the clumps of reeds, from which the spray usually issued, were encrusted with tiny jewels of frost.

"Do you really prefer going home without me, Sally? I don't feel I should allow

you to go alone and yet you look tired. I suppose we should not have walked so far. I have promised to wait near the Little Trianon until Peggy and Ralph Marshall join us. This is Ralph's first visit to Versailles and I am afraid if we are not there when he and Peggy arrive they will wait on indefinitely, expecting us to appear. You will take the tram just as I explained to you and go directly home. I should have remembered you had been ill."

The younger of the two American girls shook her head impatiently.

"Please give up that fallacy, Bettina; I have not been ill, I have never been seriously ill in my life. I simply spent six weeks in the country to satisfy Aunt Patricia and to enjoy being as lazy as I wished. Some day perhaps I may tell you what made me unhappy after our retreat to Paris, but not now. At present I am going to desert you not so much because I am tired as because Peggy Webster and Ralph Marshall in their present engaged state bore me. Goodby, I know the way to our new home perfectly and will have no difficulty in reaching there alone. If you

are late I will make your peace with Tante. It is enough that we should have one invalid in the family!"

And with a wave of her hand Sally Ashton departed, walking toward one of the nearby gates which led from the great park into the town of Versailles.

Delayed in Paris longer than she had anticipated, it was only ten days before that Miss Patricia Lord had managed to move the Camp Fire girls and Mrs. Burton from their pension in Paris to her furnished house at Versailles. But no one of them had regretted the delay, having in the interval witnessed President Wilson's brilliant welcome by the city of Paris and the opening of the Allied Peace Conference.

Yet this afternoon, as Bettina waited in the famous garden for the coming of her friends, she was glad to have escaped from the turmoil and excitement of Paris into the comparative quiet of Versailles.

All her life, except for the few persons to whom she gave her devoted affection, Bettina had cared more for books than for human beings, which may have partly explained her lack of interest in the social

life of Washington to which her parents' positions entitled her.

At this moment she opened a book she had brought with her, a history of Queen Marie Antionette and Louis XVI. Down the long avenue she could see the outlines of the stately palace, which had been started as a hunting box for Louis XIII, transformed into its present magnificence by the great Louis XIV, and been the home of the last days of the ill-fated Louis XVI and his Queen.

Closer to where Bettina was at present seated was the Little Trianon, the pleasure palace presented to Marie Antoinette by the King, and it was here under a group of the famous Louisiana cypress trees that Bettina had agreed to meet Peggy and Ralph.

She did not wish to be late for her appointment; only a few days before Ralph had arrived in Paris on his way home to the United States and this was his first visit to the park at Versailles. No one could say how long he would remain in France before his orders to sail, but at least he and Peggy had the satisfaction of having their engage-

ment formally acknowledged, although their marriage, because of Peggy's youth, was still indefinitely postponed.

Bettina did not share Sally's attitude toward her friends. Since her earliest girlhood she and Peggy had been singularly devoted to each other, and although she did not believe the old friendship could continue after Peggy's marriage with the same degree of sympathy and affection, nevertheless she meant to make the best of a three-cornered friendship.

It was still too early for her engagement, yet Bettina, after reading only a few chapters, closed her book and got up. It was growing a little cold and she would walk on toward the Little Trianon and wait in some more sheltered place for Ralph's and Peggy's arrival.

As she had plenty of time she strolled along down the Avenue de Trianon, studying the details of her surroundings with even more interest than usual.

A little path led away from the avenue to a high stone wall.

Never before had Bettina seen either the path or the wall in her frequent wander-

ings about the great Park of Versailles. A little aimlessly she now followed the path, discovering that the wall was about six feet in height and oval in shape with long tendrils of winter vines partly hiding it. Strange that she had never noticed this particular wall which might conceal some place of special interest! Yet the Park was so immense and held so many objects of beauty and value that one might spend half a lifetime without seeing all its treasures.

Circling the stone wall Bettina noticed a narrow opening just large enough to permit one person to enter.

There was no one near. At the present time no visitors were allowed to explore the great Park at Versailles without a special permit from the French authorities. The Camp Fire girls owed their privilege to the kindness of Monsieur Georges Duval, the French Senator who was Mrs. Burton's friend.

Bettina stepped up to the opening in the wall and glanced in. Inside was an enclosed garden. In the winter time one could see that the garden was an old and carefully

tended one, which in the spring or summer would be a place of rare loveliness.

This was probably a portion of the English garden of Queen Marie Antoinette, about which Bettina had read. It must have also been a secret garden, for the opening in the wall was scarcely a gateway, a narrow section of stone had been removed, which could be restored and leave no sign.

Without reflecting or considering whether she possessed the right to gratify her curiosity, Bettina slipped inside the little garden.

The grass was still green, the paths carefully tended and free from weeds. In the large flower beds the plants were covered from the winter frosts.

The garden held a remarkable variety of shrubs and trees.

Overhead branches of the trees intertwined like long bare arms. Heavy vines of roses formed dim canopies above white pergolas, which with the coming of spring and summer would be bowers of flowers.

Close against the oval stone wall were carefully trimmed evergreen trees, their

eternal green a restful background for the riot of color which the garden must offer in its seasons of blooming.

Bettina wandered farther along the footpaths which led deeper and deeper inside the enclosure. The garden was larger than she had first believed and more fascinating.

Finally she entered a maze, made of closely trimmed box hedge which she had never seen in France. Some of the designs were squares, others oval or triangular in shape. At last she came to the central design, where the hedge had been so trimmed that the grass enclosure was in the shape of a large heart.

Smiling Bettina stopped at this point. How romantic the little garden appeared, shut away from the outside world of long tumult and strife!

Then suddenly she appreciated that it was growing late for her engagement and she must cease from her romantic dreaming.

Bettina now turned and began to retrace her steps with the idea of leaving the secret garden as soon as possible.

So absorbed had she been by her unexpected discoveries and her own reflections

that she had evidently remained longer than she intended. Even now Peggy and Ralph were probably awaiting her. However, they would probably not mind being alone for a little longer time.

On some other occasion, if she were allowed, Bettina felt she would like to show them this tiny, enchanted garden. How strange to recall that Marie Antoinette had often wandered in these same paths! And also that with the execution of Queen Marie Antoinette and King Louis XVI, France had begun her long struggle for liberty and equality, a struggle which the great European war had only continued on a more worldwide scale.

But Bettina now discovered that she was not making her way out of the labyrinth so easily as she had entered it. Twice she found that she had wandered through the maze only to arrive again at the heart-shaped design in the center.

Nearly a quarter of an hour Bettina expended before she reached the path which led to the opening in the stone wall through which she had entered into the secret garden.

Yet at the end of this path, Bettina decided that she must have made a second mistake. The path led directly to the wall, yet there was no opening to be seen, no sign of any gateway.

Retracing her steps she followed another path, but with the same result. Finally she attempted to walk around the entire wall inside the garden, searching for an opening in every available space.

It was impossible to climb the wall, the surface was too smooth and steep, nevertheless, several times Bettina made futile attempts. Then she tried calling for help, although recognizing the difficulty of attracting any one's attention.

The winter twilight was beginning to close in and in ordinary times tourists were not permitted inside the Park after dark. Whoever had charge of the little garden must have closed the gate and gone away for the night.

Finally Bettina concluded that she must expect to remain inside the secret garden for the night. There was nothing to do save to accept the situation philosophically. She would be cold and hungry and lonely,

It Was Impossible To Climb the Wall

but many persons had lived through far greater misfortunes. The worst of her present situation was the anxiety her failure to return home would occasion her friends.

During the long hours before morning she must amuse herself by peopling the little garden with the picturesque ghosts of its past.

A little after eight o'clock, having by this time decided that she could not hope for rescue until the next day, Bettina searched until she found the best possible shelter for the night on a little bench within a clump of evergreens.

CHAPTER VII

Next Morning

IT must have been between nine and ten o'clock the next day when Bettina heard voices in the garden.

She was not fully awake; having slept but little during the night and only dozing fitfully since daybreak.

Except for the cold she had not suffered especial discomfort. During the early hours of the evening, accepting the inevitable result of her own action, Bettina had refused to allow herself to become frightened or miserable, as many girls would have done under the same circumstances. This was partly due to her own temperament, but perhaps more to her father's influence and training. A poor boy, who had made his own way to a distinguished position, Senator Graham had long discussed with Bettina, with whom he was peculiarly intimate, the futility of wasting one's energy against a

set of unimportant circumstances which cannot be overcome.

So when darkness fell and the stars came out and Bettina found herself becoming lonely and unhappy, deliberately she had set about to overcome her mood. This could best be accomplished by thinking not of herself and the uneasiness she was causing Mrs. Burton and her Camp Fire friends, but by entertaining herself with an imaginary story. Having read so many stories recently the effort was not difficult.

So Bettina had pictured to herself a lady of the court of Queen Marie Antoinette, conceiving her as young, stately and reserved, with lovely fair hair, blue eyes and delicate features.

Indeed the heroine of Bettina's self-told tale, as so often happens with the heroines of one's imagination, bore a likeness to herself. But with the personal resemblance the analogy ceased.

In Bettina's romance, Mademoiselle Elise Dupuy is the daughter of a poor French nobleman whose parents desire her marriage to a man of great wealth but far older than herself. Elise is one of the Maids of Honor

at Queen Marie Antoinette's court. Both the King and Queen are also anxious for her marriage, wishing to attach her fiancé to their service.

As the young French girl refuses the marriage she is banished from Court. Hoping she may reconsider her position Queen Marie Antoinette, who has an affection for her as well, has sent her to spend the winter months alone at the Little Trianon. She has a few servants to care for her, but no friends are allowed to see her and no letters are to be written her, save that now and then a letter from the Queen to ask if she has decided to submit her will to those in authority over her.

So strong was Bettina's creative imagination and so frequent her habit of entertaining herself in secret with the stories that she hoped some day to write, that during the long hours of the night, her little French heroine became a real person to her.

She had a remarkably clear vision of Elise Dupuy walking alone in the Queen's secret garden three centuries ago. Mam'selle Dupuy wore lovely flowered silk gowns and a flowing mantle and the picture hats which were the fashion of her day.

The point of Bettina Graham's romance, wherein it differed from more conventional fiction, was that Elsie Dupuy had no young lover who made her marriage distasteful.

Instead the young French girl desired to dedicate her life to the service of the women and children of France.

Recalling the past, one must remember that in the days of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, the poor of France were starving. Among the nobility and wealthy classes there was no interest in their fate, until after the advent of the French revolution and the execution of the King and Queen.

Therefore, no one sympathized or believed in Elise Dupuy's self imposed mission, which received no aid or support from her friends. In Bettina's story, the young French girl, through the assistance of one of the servants at the Little Trianon, who is in accord with her, makes her escape from Versailles to Paris, and there begins her lifework among the poor.

The years pass on and Marie Antoinette is about to be beheaded. Her one friend now is Elise Dupuy, who is herself a working

girl and beloved by the people and the leaders of the revolution.

Elise makes an effort to save the Queen but is unsuccessful.

One winter afternoon, returning to the secret garden near the Little Trianon, again she wanders about remembering and regretting her lost friend.

At first she is walking there alone, but later some one joins her, a young man who is her lover, a French workman, a printer by trade and a member of the Sans-Culotte.

At first he pleads vainly for Elise's love, but in the end she agrees to their marriage, provided she is to be allowed to continue her work among the poor.

Afterwards as the young lovers walk about in the garden together, Bettina's impressions became more confused.

Half a dozen times during the long night, while in the act of composing her story, Bettina had fallen asleep, only to awaken at intervals and go on with it. In her dreams the story had often grown strangely confused with her own personal experience.

Now, as a matter of fact, long after the

coming of day, when first she heard human voices speaking close beside her in the garden, during the first few moments of waking, Bettina had still to struggle between the reality and her dream.

Several hours she had been half seated, half reclining on a small stone settee protected from the wind by evergreens. During the night she had often walked about at different periods of time in order to keep her blood in circulation.

Yet now, trying to rise and ask for aid and also to explain her presence in the garden, Bettina found herself scarcely able to move. She had not realized that she had grown so benumbed and cramped from her exposure to the winter night.

She made an effort to cry out, but found speech as difficult as movement. The voices which had sounded so nearby a short time before were growing less distinct. Unless she could attract some one's attention immediately, she must remain an indefinite length of time, half frozen and half starved in the Queen's garden. In all probability no one ever entered it save the gardeners who came in now and then to take care of it.

Bettina's second effort to call for help was more successful.

The following instant she became aware of a puzzled silence. Then the voices addressed each other again, as if they were questioning their own ears.

A third time Bettina called, making another effort to move forward. Then she knew that some one must have heard her, because the footsteps which had been dying away a short time before were now approaching.

There was a figure in marble nearby, the figure of a Greek girl, and against this Bettina leaned for support, scarcely conscious of what she was doing.

The next moment two persons were standing within a few feet of her, both faces betraying an almost equal astonishment.

The one was an old Frenchman's, evidently one of the park gardeners, since he had on his working clothes and the insignia of his occupation. His skin, which was weather beaten and wrinkled at all times, now seemed to crinkle into fresh lines through surprise and consternation.

"*Mon Dieu!*" he exclaimed, staring blankly and offering no further aid or suggestion.

His companion was a young man, whom, in spite of her exhausted condition, Bettina recognized at once as one of her own countrymen.

Instantly, whatever his secret astonishment, he came forward and without asking permission, slipped his arm through Bettina's, having realized that she was hardly able to stand alone.

Yet he had seen an extraordinary picture he was not likely to forget. Against the background of an early winter morning landscape, her arm resting for support upon the arm of a piece of Greek statuary, was a young girl, almost as pale as the marble image.

Her eyes were a deep cornflower blue, her fair hair pushed up under her small fur hat, her lips and the tip of her nose blue with cold. Fortunately for her she wore a close-fitting long fur coat. Yet, in spite of her physical discomfort, she did not look especially disconcerted.

"I am afraid I am rather an unexpected

apparition," she began, speaking slowly and yet finding her voice growing stronger with each word. "Neither have I a very satisfactory explanation for my presence here in this garden, which I know tourists are not supposed to enter. But I was passing by yesterday and seeing an opening in the wall I came in here for a few moments. It is the old story with persons who are too curious. I was not able to find the gate afterwards and spent the night here alone. Will either of you be kind enough to show me the way out? I am afraid my friends have spent a very uncomfortable time because of my stupidity."

Appreciating the kindness of his intention, nevertheless, Bettina drew her arm from her companion's clasp, and turned to the French gardener.

She observed an expression in the old man's face which made her glad of the unexpected presence of one of her own countrymen. The man's look was undoubtedly troubled and suspicious, and a moment later Bettina was able to appreciate his discomfiture.

"You are looking tired; I am sorry to

be compelled to doubt your story," he responded, speaking in French and with a Frenchman's innate courtesy.

Then he turned to the younger man.

"You understand my position, sir, I will not be doing my duty unless the young lady can prove that what she has just told me is true. Ever since the war began we have been forced to doubt every story. Now that the war is over until peace is actually declared, and afterwards maybe, France has got to be pretty careful to see that no harm comes to her again from her enemy. The old palace at Versailles is closed just at present, but the Germans are to sign the peace terms in the old Hall of Peace, and it wouldn't look well if trouble should come to anybody here at Versailles. I have been a gardener in this park for something over a quarter of a century. The young lady must go with me to the proper authorities. They will understand what she has to say better than I can, though it is true she speaks the French language very well."

Recognizing the justice of the old gardener's point of view, in spite of her fatigue, Bettina nodded.

"Certainly, I will do whatever you think best. Only I am so very tired and cold and hungry, may I have something to eat and a chance to get warm before I try to talk to anybody?"

Then she turned to the young American.

"I wonder if you would be so good as to telephone my friends and tell them I am all right. I know they have been dreadfully worried about me and, although my story does sound rather improbable, I am sure I shall have no difficulty in proving it. If you will please call up Mrs. Richard Burton, 27 Rue de Varennes, I shall be deeply grateful. My name is Bettina Graham; my father is Senator Graham of Washington and I have been in France for some time helping with the reclamation work."

"I say, Miss Graham, then I know your father slightly!" the young man exclaimed. "I have been living in Washington for several years, only for the past few weeks I have been in France as one of the unimportant members of the United States Peace Commission.

"My name is David Hale. Of course I will telephone your friends with pleasure,

but I think you had best allow me to go along with you afterwards as perhaps I may be useful. I am boarding in Versailles at present because the hotels in Paris are so crowded and by a lucky chance I was allowed to pay a visit to the Queen's secret garden this morning. I don't have to go into Paris for several hours, not until the afternoon session of the Peace Commission."

At this the old gardener, evidently relieved by the turn events had taken, started off, Bettina and her new acquaintance following.

A few feet further along, David Hale, added unexpectedly:

"See here, Miss Graham, you probably may not appreciate the fact, but I have seen you before. I was in Paris the day the armistice was signed, having been sent over to France on a special mission a little time before. On the morning of the great day an American woman, a friend of mine whose son had been killed fighting in France, asked me to place a bouquet on the statue of Alsace Lorraine in the Place de la Concorde. It is queer I should re-

member perhaps, but you were standing close beside the monument. I call this a piece of good luck."

Bettina smiled, although not feeling in a particularly cheerful mood.

"I am sure the good luck is mine."

CHAPTER VIII

A Home in Versailles

IT was toward dusk.

In a large, low grate inside a French drawing-room a freshly lighted fire was burning. Curtains of heavy, dark red silk were closely drawn over the long windows.

Before the fire a young girl was seated in a chair beside a Madame Recamier couch upon which an older woman was lying.

They were both apparently dressed for a late dinner, the girl in a costume of dull blue crepe, her companion in what appeared to be a combination of tea gown and dinner dress. The gown was of pale grey silk and chiffon with a lining of rose. The sofa was piled with a number of grey and rose colored cushions.

The drawing-room was a fashionable one revealing wealth and taste in its furnishings and following the usual French design.

The walls were ivory in tone and embellished with garlands of cupids and flow-

ers. The larger rug, which covered the entire floor, was of French tapestry, the furniture of the drawing-room had been copied from a set of the furniture of the great Napoleon, preserved in the Louvre Gallery in Paris.

On the white mantel there was a tall French clock and two beautiful Sevres vases and a small crystal bowl of flowers.

The woman and girl evidently had been talking for some time.

"Well, Bettina," Mrs. Burton continued, "after all perhaps you are fairly fortunate to have gotten out of last night's adventure as well as you have! You look a little more rested since your sleep and you insist you have not taken cold. Last night there was nothing which could occur in the most sensational novel, which I did not imagine had happened to you. Yet what did occur was more unexpected and more picturesque than any of my fears!"

Bettina smiled.

"A pity, wasn't it, that such a romantic experience should have befallen me rather than one of the other Camp Fire girls! I am really such a prosaic person! All

night I did my best to entertain myself by composing a long drawn out story for my own amusement, and yet all the time I knew that I was cold and hungry and dreadfully homesick for you. I really never shed a tear, although I should have liked to shed floods of them. But I am sorry you had to suffer such anxiety. Small wonder that Aunt Patricia received my return so ungraciously. I believe her first remark when we met in the hall, was, that either I was to sail for home at once, or you were, as she would not have you so harassed.

I found it somewhat difficult under the circumstances to maintain my dignity before my rescuer, when Aunt Patricia began her lecture. If I had not showed signs of breaking down and demanded to be taken to you at once, goodness knows what might not have happened!

I was sorry to leave Mr. Hale with Aunt Patricia when he had been so kind; I suppose he received the rest of the lecture which was intended for me. At present I am grateful to possess a distinguished father; not only did Mr. Hale know him, but when he explained to the French officials that I

was Senator Graham's daughter, they became much more lenient in their manner toward me. Perhaps though I am not yet through the unfortunate results of my curiosity. It would not surprise me if I were kept under surveillance for some time by the French authorities. They must be convinced I had no sinister motive in concealing myself in the secret garden. The old gardener helped me by explaining that he had accidentally left the little gate open and closed it before dusk without entering the garden again."

Stretching out her hand Mrs. Burton now placed it on Bettina's hair, lit with gold from the flame of the fire.

"Promise me, Bettina, and each one of you Camp Fire girls must make me the same promise, you are never to go out alone again while we are together in France. I was worried over Sally's coming back without you, although I then supposed you to be with Peggy and Ralph. In fact I did not know you had not returned with them until hours later. Aunt Patricia insisted that the information be kept a secret from me and ordered me to lie down in my own room

under the usual pretence of my health. But I think I was suspicious all evening. I always feel restless when anything is going wrong with one of you Camp Fire girls, and hearing the talking and confusion in the house later in the night I demanded to be told the difficulty. You must forgive Aunt Patricia's reception of you, however, Bettina as she was wretched about you. You know she is devoted to your mother and we both had visions of having to cable to your father and mother that their beloved daughter had vanished, been swallowed up in this foreign land.

"But don't worry over Aunt Patricia's treatment of your new acquaintance, Mr. Hale. She is as grateful to him as you and I, rather more so, since she has asked him to dine with us tonight when I should have preferred to have you girls alone."

At this moment Mrs. Burton leaned back upon the cushions of her couch, while Bettina gazed into the fire without replying. She was more unhappy over the events of the past night than she wished to confess.

Undoubtedly her mother would be seriously annoyed when the story of her esca-

pade reached her. Before the present occasion Bettina had offended her mother's ideas of conventional propriety, and she had really so little excuse for last night's proceeding. Was there a possibility that the French authorities at Versailles might report the matter and that her father might be asked to substantiate her story?

Without realizing what she was doing, Bettina sighed.

"Don't worry, Bettina," Mrs. Burton answered, divining her train of thought. "I will write your mother immediately and explain the situation. It was my fault to have allowed you girls to go into the Park too independently. Your mother is always convinced of my innate unconventionality and that I need some one to look after me as much as you do.

"Besides, don't let us take a simple circumstance too seriously. I much prefer there be as little discussion as possible of your recent adventure. I mean to speak of this to Mr. Hale when he dines with us tonight and I am sure he will agree with me. We do not wish any gossip in the village, or any chance for the newspapers to get hold of the story.

"I am rather amused over Aunt Patricia. It is my idea that we are to have rather a superior dinner tonight in order to impress this Mr. David Hale, who by the way has an extremely nice name and agreeable manners. Aunt Patricia may protest that our present elegance is a reward to you Camp Fire girls for the simplicity and hard work at our farmhouse on the Aisne, and also to restore me more speedily to health. But I don't think she is above enjoying our temporary grandeur herself and of showing off just the least little bit to other people. I have also observed that violent as her attacks are upon men in a general fashion, she is always apt to take their side in a personal situation. I never have the least hope of her assuming I am ever right in any argument I may have with my husband. Now she and Captain Burton are determined to send me back to the United States as soon as our stay at Versailles is ended, while I want very much to spend the summer in England before we return home."

As Mrs. Burton had intended it should be, Bettina's attention was diverted from her own difficulty.

"Don't try to explain Aunt Patricia to any one of her present family at this late date," she replied, smiling reminiscently. "I think your group of Camp Fire girls has come to understand her fairly well by this time. At least we feel we owe your life to the splendid fight she made for your after you were wounded by the German shell. When both the surgeon from Paris and Captain Burton had no further hope, she would fight on.

"Then think of all she has done for us since our arrival in glorious France, first at our farmhouse on the Aisne and now as guests in this charming French house! Why, we are actually wearing the clothes she has insisted upon having made for us, not only that we may be dressed in a proper holiday fashion to celebrate the approach of peace, but that she may keep her little French dressmaker Marguerite Arnot, her latest protégé, constantly employed. What an artist Marguerite is! If I could persuade her to return to Washington with me, mother would forgive me every fault.

"I suppose you also know that she rented this house in Versailles not alone for our

pleasure and because it is such a charming home, but because she heard that Madame Forêt, whom we met at our pension in Paris, had no other income left since the war save the income from this house. She has two little girls to support; both her sons were killed in the war!"

Mrs. Burton nodded.

"Yes, Aunt Patricia's kindness leaves one nearly defenceless. It is dreadfully difficult sometimes to be forced to disagree with her."

She was silent a moment and then added:

"Sometimes, do you know, Bettina, I feel it is selfish even to rejoice over the approach of peace! There is still so much sorrow and suffering in the world! Only this morning I received a letter from my sister, Mrs. Webster, saying that her son, Dan Webster, is still a prisoner in Germany. I am glad not to have heard of his imprisonment until the war was over; I suppose now he will be released very soon. Moreover, Yvonne continues to worry over not receiving a letter from her brother, Lieutenant Fleury, although she knows he is only doing border duty with the Army

of Occupation. I presume she fears he has not completely recovered from the injury through which Sally Ashton nursed him in such a surprising fashion."

A moment Bettina gazed at the older woman, hesitating to ask a question. Then she said slowly and with some embarrassment:

"I know it is one of our Camp Fire rules not to gossip about one another. But do you mind telling me, Tante, what do you think has caused the change in Sally Ashton! She is so unlike the Sally we formerly knew! Yet she declares there is nothing the matter and is angry if one suggests she is ill. The doctor Sally saw in Paris said she had suffered a nervous breakdown. Perhaps it is absurdly sentimental of me, but I have wondered if she could have fallen in love with Lieutenant Fleury after her care of him?"

Sitting up a second time and resting her chin upon her hands, with the palms folded together in a characteristic attitude, Mrs. Burton answered:

"No, we must not gossip, Bettina dear. Yet I must say I am as much in the dark

as you can be over Sally. So far she has not taken me into her confidence. If anything has made her unhappy in the past, or is troubling her now, Aunt Patricia alone may have some idea of the cause. I saw the transformation in Sally on the very day we met along the roadside during our retreat with the French refugees toward Paris. At that time I did not like to ask Sally what had affected her so seriously and I have never asked her since then.

"It is my own impression that something unfortunate must have occurred in the few days which Sally spent with Vera Lagerloff and Aunt Patricia at the farmhouse, after the rest of us started on in advance to the Château Yvonne. Sometimes I wonder if any of you girls will go back to your own country in the least like you were when we came to France to organize the first French Camp Fire? I suppose not, you have seen too much of courage and suffering among the French people. But I hope you will spare me any other engagement than Peggy's and Ralph's. I do wish you children were not growing up and away from our Camp Fire life together. You make me feel so dreadfully old these days!"

"But geniuses never grow old, do they?" Bettina asked, and then as Mrs. Burton smiled at her tactful rejoinder, Bettina added: "Don't worry over me. But there is something I wish to suggest. Suppose we have a Camp Fire meeting as soon as there is an opportunity and discuss what work we should undertake in the next few months, while we await the coming of peace! Now the war has ended we must begin to make other plans. I was thinking of this last night as well as of my French romance in the long hours I was alone."

Just as the Camp Fire guardian was about to reply, suddenly the drawing-room door opened and two persons entered the room. They were Miss Patricia Lord and Sally Ashton.

Immediately Miss Patricia switched on the electric lights so that the room, which had been in semi-darkness the instant before, at once became illuminated.

"What in the world are you and Bettina doing here in the dark, Polly? I never can endure darkness. I presume you are exchanging confidences and rejoicing over Bettina's last night's adventure, since you

both are more romantic than sensible. Personally I am very much ashamed of such an escapade, and as a Camp Fire guardian you should be equally so. However, I do wish you and Bettina would both go to your rooms and dress for dinner. I hope to induce Mr. Hale to realize we are not the character of people he must suppose us to be. The young man tells me he is associated with the work of the Peace Conference. I presume he has heard that you are an actress, Polly Burton, and so naturally expects to find us all Bohemians."

Always sensitive to any criticism of her career, Mrs. Burton flushed, but answered good naturedly:

"Very well, Aunt Patricia, I shall try to be as conventional tonight as possible, to persuade Bettina's rescuer that we do not ordinarily permit our Camp Fire girls to spend their nights alone in secret gardens. But so far as dressing is concerned, why Bettina and I are both under the impression we are already dressed. We had our tea together in my room, where we were both lying down, and dressed afterwards."

Miss Patricia Lord, who was wearing a

dingy black costume which she had purchased at a reduced price some months before at the Bon Marché and had worn almost constantly since, now eyed Mrs. Burton's grey and rose colored gown with extreme disfavor.

"You were not intending to appear at dinner in your dressing gown, were you, Polly Burton? Is that your idea of making a suitable impression upon our guest? I had a gown sent to you today from a shop in Paris. It is now on your bed ready for you to put on. If you do not happen to like it, it does not matter as I admire it very much. It will make you look older than the absurd clothes you ordinarily wear and is also more appropriate for a Camp Fire guardian. Sally Ashton will go to your room with you and help you to dress. Not that you should require assistance, or that your maid Marie is ever occupied with useful work, but because Sally has something she wishes to say to you alone."

Miss Patricia's manner then became slightly more gracious.

"You are looking fairly well, Bettina. Marguerite seems to have a gift for under-

standing the style of costume each one of you Camp Fire girls should affect. You need not change your dress unless you like. Dinner is to be served at eight."

CHAPTER IX

The Dinner Party

TONIGHT, as the group of Camp Fire girls were seated at dinner, their appearance afforded a striking contrast to the ordinary simplicity of their lives within the past few years which they had spent together.

The long oval dinner table held a basket of white roses in the center. Above the roses and attached to the crystal chandelier was a white dove. On the table were white candles and two silken flags, the United States flag and the French, which lay one beside the other across the white cloth.

Seated at the head of the table and presiding over her peace dinner was Miss Patricia Lord, but a Miss Patricia whom no one of the Camp Fire girls had ever beheld before tonight.

Vanished was her usually shabby and old-fashioned attire! In its place for this occasion she wore a gown of black satin and

lace of unusual elegance. Indeed, through the art of her French dressmaker even Miss Patricia's ordinary ungainliness had been metamorphosed into a unique distinction. Never lacking dignity even in the shabbiest attire through sheer force of personality, tonight she was almost handsome as well.

Her hair had been arranged by a hair dresser, so that the soft waves over her forehead gave her a less severe expression, a slight color due to the excitement of her dinner party and her gratification over Mrs. Burton's and the Camp Fire girls' appearance, made her cheeks glow with something approaching the past radiance of youth.

Moreover, Miss Patricia was finding herself agreeably entertained by the guest who sat upon her right.

Mr. David Hale was probably not aware of what extent the dinner, with its suggestion of a peace table, had been hurriedly arranged in order to impress him. But if Miss Patricia had desired to make an impression, she had accomplished the result she wished to achieve.

As he talked to Miss Patricia, whom he discovered to be an extremely well informed

woman as well as a decidedly original character, he was at the same time able to observe with a good deal of pleasure the group of charming girls by whom he was surrounded.

Any other hostess than Miss Patricia Lord, under similar circumstances, would have seen that Bettina Graham was placed beside her new acquaintance, who had been so kind after their unexpected meeting. But any one, who has learned to know Miss Patricia, by this time must have appreciated that her tactics were not always those of other people.

Bettina did not sit next Mr. Hale but almost directly across from him. Yvonne Fleury was placed on his other side. As Yvonne was French and the young man an American, they might be supposed to be interested in making each other's acquaintance. So far as Bettina was concerned Miss Patricia had a definite purpose in her dinner arrangement. Mr. Hale was not to imagine that his passing acquaintance with Bettina, or his opportunity to render her a personal service, was necessarily to lead to further intimacy.

In Miss Patricia's eyes Bettina had appeared, before a stranger, in an extremely unfortunate and undignified position. She must therefore be restored to proper dignity both by her own behavior and the attitude of her friends.

In the adventure between Sally Ashton and Lieutenant Fleury,* Miss Patricia had been actuated by this same motive, although she had expressed it so differently.

Tonight, in spite of her critical attitude, Miss Patricia was fairly well satisfied with Bettina Graham's demeanor. Whatever Bettina's impression of herself as lacking in social grace, she had been witness for many years to the charm of her mother's manner, to her gift for knowing and saying just what the occasion demanded and must have learned of her.

In her greeting of Mr. Hale on his arrival earlier in the evening, Bettina had displayed just the proper degree of appreciation of his kindness, neither too much or too little. Immediately after she had effaced herself in order that he might devote his attention to her Camp Fire guardian and Miss Patricia.

*See "The Camp Fire Girls on the Field of Honor."

If the young American had become interested in Bettina through their romantic encounter, Miss Patricia had decided that he could be allowed the privilege of looking at her, or even of addressing a remark to her across the table, but for the present this was sufficient.

If her own judgment counted for anything, Bettina was well worth observation on this particular occasion.

Notwithstanding her leniency in regard to Bettina's previous costume, Bettina had answered her unspoken wish and was now wearing her prettiest evening gown. The dress was made of white chiffon with bands of silver embroidery over the shoulders and around the waist. She also wore a little fine string of pearls, a gift from her father several years before.

Bettina's fair hair was bound closely about her head in two heavy braids; it was a characteristic of her's that she was always at her best in evening clothes, partly because her head was so beautifully set on her long, slender neck.

She was next Ralph Marshall and on his other side was Peggy Webster. Peggy wore

a rose-colored gown and with her dark hair and eyes and brilliant color formed a striking contrast to Bettina's fairness.

How utterly different had been the circumstances of the lives of this particular group of Camp Fire girls before their association with one another! And yet in their own way each girl appeared tonight at almost equal advantage!

Vera Lagerloff was the daughter of Russian peasants who had emigrated to the United States and were at present small farmers upon a portion of Peggy Webster's father's large estate.

Vera was perhaps not beautiful in the opinion of most persons, but was singularly interesting, with her long Slavic eyes of a curious grayish green shade, her heavy hair, and her expression of dignity and intelligence.

Moreover, she also had been transformed into greater beauty through the art of Miss Patricia's newly discovered French dressmaker.

Vera's dress was of an unusual shade of green, a little like the color of her eyes, a shade few persons could have worn, but

peculiarly suited to her. Following simple, almost severely plain lines, the dress was trimmed with an odd piece of old Russian embroidery, of bronze and green and blue threads.

Alice and Sally Ashton were both in white; as Alice had reddish hair and the complexion which usually accompanies it, white was always more becoming to her than anything else. But tonight Sally looked too thin and white herself to have worn so colorless a costume. One can scarcely imagine how Sally had altered in the past months; her soft rounded outlines had disappeared and she was now almost painfully thin. There were hollows under her brown eyes, which had lost their childish expression, and hollows in her cheeks, where the dimples which she had so resented had formerly been.

Mary Gilchrist wore a blue dress made as simply as possible, which emphasized the almost boyish grace of her figure. Her hair, with its bright red lights, was piled in a loose mass on top of her head, her cheeks were glowing.

In spite of the change in the conditions of their present Camp Fire life, Mary Gilchrist

had not given up her outdoor existence. A portion of nearly every day she devoted to driving wounded, convalescent soldiers about in her motor car in order that they should enjoy the air and entertainment.

Yvonne Fleury wore a violet crepe as she had promised her Camp Fire guardian not to wear mourning, but did not wish to appear in any more brilliant color.

There was only one sombre note tonight at Miss Patricia's table; a young girl, a stranger, who sat near Mrs. Burton, was in black. The dress she was wearing, although of an inexpensive material, was light in texture and not unattractive. Nevertheless, its wearer seemed to feel both shy and uncomfortable. She must have been about nineteen or twenty, older than the Camp Fire girls.

Some weeks before, having introduced the young French dressmaker, Marguerite Arnot, into her family, Miss Patricia had since insisted that she become an actual member of it. In spite of her work she was expected to appear with the family at the table and to share in so far as possible in the ordinary daily life of the other girls.

Tonight vainly had she pleaded to be spared the ordeal of a fashionable dinner, only to find Miss Patricia adamant.

Mrs. Burton was placed beside a former acquaintance, whose appearance as one of the guests at Miss Patricia's hastily arranged dinner, had caused her a moment's surprise. No suggestion had Miss Patricia made to her, that she intended inviting Senator Georges Duval, for whom she had always expressed a decided antagonism.

But after a little consideration of the matter, Mrs. Burton understood Miss Patricia Lord's sudden change of front.

During the months of their work in one of the devastated districts of France, Miss Patricia had at least appeared to dislike her friendship with the distinguished Frenchman. However, since their arrival in Paris and now at Versailles, there might be a number of ways in which a French senator might be of service to the Camp Fire girls. Bettina's recent adventure particularly emphasized the fact that his friendship might prove useful. And Miss Patricia was not in the least averse to using persons for the sake of her friends, provided that she did them no harm.

Her invitation tonight to Senator Duval to meet the young American named David Hale, had a well thought out purpose behind it.

Should Bettina become involved in suspicion and gossip due to her last night's experience, they would both have learned to know Bettina's position. They would also understand how entirely accidental her entrance into the secret garden had been and how impossible to leave after the small gate had closed behind her.

Certainly the French authorities must accept so simple an explanation.

Mrs. Burton also felt a little amused by Miss Patricia's now transparent reason for desiring her to be more elaborately dressed for dinner than she had originally intended.

As a matter of fact on retiring to her room she had hesitated before putting on the exquisite costume which Aunt Patricia had evidently just purchased for her from one of the best known designers of women's clothes in Paris. The ungraciousness with which she had been ordered to her room and told to dress a second time was also explained. For years, ever since Miss Pa-

tricia's inheritance from her brother of her large fortune, both Mrs. Burton and her husband, Captain Burton, had been protesting against the extravagant gifts which Miss Patricia frequently insisted upon bestowing upon them, and especially upon Mrs. Burton, who was the one person for whom she cared most in the world.

Whatever Miss Patricia's economies and conscientious scruples with regard to spending money upon herself, she had no such scruples in connection with Mrs. Burton.

Therefore risking the possibility both of wounding and offending Miss Patricia, Mrs. Burton had positively declined allowing her to bestow upon her any gifts of value.

An ordinary evening frock, Miss Patricia would of course declare possessed no value. Yet Mrs. Burton had appreciated that the dress she was at this moment wearing at dinner was not of this character.

She had felt she should refuse to accept it, but she had not wished to hurt Miss Patricia and also she had not wished to relinquish the dress once she had tried it on.

It looked simple, yet Mrs. Burton had a

sufficient knowledge and appreciation of clothes to recognize the exceptional beauty of her present gift.

As she sat talking and laughing with Senator Duval, Miss Patricia surveyed both Mrs. Burton and her own purchase with entire satisfaction.

The dress looked as if it had been designed solely for Mrs. Burton and could have been successfully worn by no one else.

Once Miss Patricia nodded with a peculiar satisfaction which, had her action been observed, no one would have understood.

As a matter of fact she was thinking that there were persons who insisted that Polly Burton, the well known actress, was in no sense a beautiful woman and that her success was due entirely to her magnetism.

Miss Patricia was wishing that these same critical persons might have beheld Mrs. Burton tonight.

The new evening frock was an unexpected combination of yellow and bronze chiffons and so skilfully were the delicate materials arranged that there was never a decided contrast. The two colors seemed to melt

into each other as if they had been a combination from an artist's brush.

The dress might have obscured another woman's personality, making the woman appear of less interest than her costume, but this was not true of Mrs. Burton.

Every now and then one of the Camp Fire girls would glance toward Mrs. Burton with a fresh appreciation of her charm. Until tonight they had not seen her in this particular setting of richness and elegance.

During the years of their outdoor Camp Fire life together, Mrs. Burton had lived almost as simply and plainly as her Camp Fire girls.

Yet it was an interesting experience for all of them, this brief change into sumptuousness which Miss Patricia's generosity was affording. Mrs. Burton revealed her own enjoyment of it.

At present her blue eyes were glowing with enthusiasm, as she sat talking with interest to her present dinner companion.

"I wonder if the French people will ever realize how glorious we feel France has been in the past four years to have endured so patiently and so courageously all the long

strain of the war fought upon her soil. Remember that in the old days one always spoke of France as 'La Belle France.' Now I think she has earned the new title of 'Glorious France.'"

But at this moment Mrs. Burton and Senator Duval were no longer able to continue their conversation, since at a signal from Miss Patricia, her guests were about to leave the table.

CHAPTER X

Camp Fire Plans and Purposes

ON the following evening, after an earlier and far simpler dinner, with no guests present, at half past seven o'clock, the group of Camp Fire girls assembled in their French drawing-room for their first ceremonial meeting since their arrival at Versailles.

The girls were wearing their Camp Fire costumes and the honor beads acquired by most of them through several years of membership in their Camp Fire group. The only new members who had been recently admitted were Mary Gilchrist and Yvonne Fleury, who had been taken into the Camp Fire during their residence in the old French farmhouse on the Aisne. Marguerite Arnot, who had only made the acquaintance of the other Camp Fire girls in the last few weeks was not at present a member of the organization.

Assuredly the present drawing-room had

never before been the scene of so unusual a ceremony! The atmosphere it created, with its artificial and conventional furnishing, was in truth a far cry from the simplicity and outdoor setting of the original camp fires.

Nevertheless, the Camp Fire girls had no idea of giving up their ceremonial meetings for any such reason. This evening to the best of their ability the drawing-room had been adapted to their purposes.

In the grate a fire burned brightly; on the high white mantel, instead of its usual ornaments, were three white candles, representing Work, Health, Love, the symbols of the American Camp Fire.

The candles were lighted, and there was no other light in the room, save one shaded lamp in the background.

Seated in a semicircle about the fire on the ceremonial cushions were the girls; Mrs. Burton had not appeared. She would come in later.

Miss Patricia had announced that she would not take part in the present ceremony and would not be seen until about bed time.

Now and then, either because she was too

much engaged with some interest of her own, or because she wished the girls to feel greater liberty for their discussions and plans, she refused to be present at the Camp Fire meetings. Yet if Miss Patricia had any particular suggestion to offer, or command to enforce, she was then very much in evidence.

Tonight, before the arrival of the Camp Fire guardian, Bettina Graham had taken charge of the meeting at the request of the other girls.

"We are supposed to begin a discussion of our plans for any new Camp Fire work we wish to undertake in France," Bettina announced.

"Since we were forced to retreat from our farmhouse on the Aisne to Paris, we seem not to have had any definite purposes. Tante and I spoke of this the other afternoon and decided to bring the question up before the Camp Fire for an open debate. Any one of us who has any idea of what character of work our Camp Fire group should undertake in France for the next few months, will please state it.

"To most of us it does seem a great

enough experience to be allowed to live here at Versailles while the work of the Peace Conference is going on in Paris. I have wondered if in any possible way the Peace Conference could offer us a personal inspiration. Does it sound too visionary to suggest that we might in some small fashion work toward future peace?"

During Bettina's speech the Camp Fire guardian had entered the room unobserved and now stood silent, listening to the discussion.

Always a little amused over Bettina's idealistic points of view and considering herself severely practical, Peggy Webster smiled a little teasingly.

"I don't believe we are going to be able to help forward the peace of the world very seriously, Princess," she argued, using the other girl's former Camp Fire title. "Moreover, I don't believe many of us will pay especial attention to the proceedings of the Peace Conference, or understand them if we did. Perhaps you and Tante and Aunt Patricia may be the exceptions. The rest of us were not brought up in a political atmosphere as you have been on account

of your father's position in Washington. Our chief pleasure in being in glorious France at this time lies in the opportunity we may have to see so many famous persons. Never shall I forget President Wilson's arrival in Paris and the wonderful enthusiasm of his reception! We must go into Paris again within a few days to witness the arrival of the Peace Delegates, who will open the plenary session of the conference at the foreign office on the Quai d'Orsai.

"So far as our own Camp Fire work is concerned, for the present don't you think being so near Paris affords us the best chance for continuing the organization of a French Camp Fire? We did start a few groups of Camp Fire girls during the months we spent on the Aisne, but the second devastation of the country by the German horde probably separated the girls so that they may never meet again. Here in Paris we can start a number of Camp Fire units at the same time. We must also try to interest some prominent French women to go on with the French Camp Fire organization after we return home."

There was a little murmur of applause as

Peggy Webster ended her extemporaneous talk.

The next instant Alice Ashton interposed, in a slightly offended tone:

"I think your suggestion for our Camp Fire work in France for the next few months admirable, Peggy. But I don't in the least agree with your statement that living here at Versailles during the dawn of peace, no one, except Bettina, is to be interested in the details of the Peace Conference. Neither do I see why Bettina's suggestion, that we try in some humble fashion to help toward peace, need be altogether scorned. Each human being can contribute a tiny quota. In the future women are to be allowed the vote, which means a voice in just such questions as may decide war or peace. Our own group of Camp Fire girls is growing up so that in a few more years we shall perhaps be too old to think of ourselves as Camp Fire girls and must begin the work of guardians. If we believe in peace, if we preach and practice it among ourselves and in our Camp Fire organization, and if the Camp Fire becomes international, as it seems to be doing, why then

just so many girls will be trained to lend the weight of their influence toward the future peace of the world!"

"Bravo, Alice! You have just said what I wished to say, only you have said it more convincingly. I did not wish to interrupt you and you girls were too interested to notice my entrance!" Mrs. Burton exclaimed.

She then sat down in a low chair which had been kept ready for her in the center of the group of girls.

"Suppose we try to follow Bettina's, Peggy's and Alice's suggestions, as they seem to me not to oppose each other," she continued.

"For my part I will undertake to find some interesting women in Paris who will agree to aid us with our French Camp Fire and take charge of it after we leave France. We must interest poorer French girls as well as rich ones, we must introduce them by letter to Camp Fire girls in the United States so they may exchange ideas and plans and learn from each other. I hate to confess the fact that you girls are growing older and must soon look forward to under-

taking the duties of Camp Fire guardians, nevertheless it is true. Your efforts here in France will be a great help later on.

"In regard to Bettina's and Alice's points of view. Naturally we cannot see at present how any one of us can help toward the future peace of society. And yet Alice is right when she insists that every tiny quota does make some difference. Every life that both preaches and practices peace is an influence for peace.

"But there is a suggestion I wish to make, which may strike you girls as more impracticable than any one else's. You girls must have read and heard, as I have recently, that a surprising amount of ill feeling has been developing between the French and American soldiers since the close of the war. Strange, isn't it, when they were such loyal comrades in arms! But I suppose it is harder to keep up the morale during the slow approach of peace than under the greater excitement of war. Senator Duval told me the other night that there is also a secret German propaganda which is trying to create ill feeling between the soldiers of the Allied armies. Well,

it may be possible that you girls will meet a number of these men in the next few weeks. Perhaps, more than you realize, you may be an influence for peace and good feeling between them! If the chance comes to any of you, do your best."

At the farthest end of the circle away from Mrs. Burton, at this moment Sally Ashton's expression changed from one of previous indifference to amusement, mingled with a faint sarcasm.

"Where did you receive the impression, Tante, that friendship between girls and men has ever been an influence for peace? So far I have not seen a great deal of the world, but I think it has more often been an occasion for war. However, you may know best!"

Sally's unexpected rejoinder had the effect of a thunderbolt launched from a clear sky into a sun warmed atmosphere.

There was only one way to receive so ill tempered a speech. Mrs. Burton laughed, the girls following her example.

Of late Sally had been so unreasonably bad tempered, so nervous and irritable, that, having made up their minds, either

that she was ill, or else seriously troubled, the Camp Fire girls had refused to pay any special attention to her rapidly changing moods.

Moreover, Sally had never made a pretence of wholly forgiving them for their suspicion of her during the time she was nursing Lieutenant Fleury back to health.*

In spite of Lieutenant Fleury's appreciation of Sally's kindness and self sacrifice, never afterwards had she and his sister, Yvonne Fleury, become intimate friends.

"Well, Sally, I was far from suggesting that any one of you girls develop a romantic friendship in the next few weeks. Difficulties only develop when romance creeps in.

"I think *one* marriage, Gerry Williams to Felipe Morris, and also Peggy's and Ralph's engagement is a sufficient supply of romance for our Camp Fire for some time to come! I am hoping Gerry and Felipe may join us when Felipe is finally discharged from the army. Gerry writes they intend returning to California and will make their home at their ranch near

*See "The Camp Fire Girls On the Field of Honor."

the spot where we spent our summer together 'Behind the Lines.'"

Purposely Mrs. Burton had changed the subject of her conversation from a Camp Fire discussion to one which she hoped might be of personal interest to Sally Ashton. After her sarcastic little speech, Sally had flushed uncomfortably, as if sorry she had spoken, and Gerry Williams had been the only one of the Camp Fire girls for whom Sally had ever displayed any particular affection.

At present Mrs. Burton was more unhappy over Sally than she had dreamed possible, having always taken it for granted that Sally would be one of the persons who would accept life in an indolent, slightly selfish fashion, without much trouble either to herself or to other people.

Certainly she had altered. And something must have occurred which was responsible for Sally's present state of mind and health.

As she was as much in the dark as ever, Mrs. Burton hoped that Aunt Patricia knew; but if Miss Patricia had expected that Sally would also make a confidante

of her in the few moments they had spent together the other evening, she had been mistaken. Sally had appeared interested only in the approaching dinner party. In answer to a direct question she had merely protested that she had nothing to confide and did not understand why she was supposed to have changed.

Two hours longer the Camp Fire girls and their guardian continued to discuss the details of their new Camp Fire work in France.

Marguerite Arnot and Yvonne Fleury both offered to introduce the American girls to their acquaintances in Paris.

And this afforded the very opportunity Mrs. Burton had hoped for; Yvonne's friends would probably be fairly well off, while Marguerite's would offer a sharp contrast.

The young French dressmaker had been working in a dressmaking establishment when Miss Patricia had first learned to know her, and before becoming a member of the household at Versailles had been living in a garret in an old house in Paris. Tonight she explained that her friends were

poor girls who were making their living just as she was.

It was actually toward midnight, with the Camp Fire rules of early bedtime forgotten, when a sharp knock came at the drawing-room door.

The girls and Mrs. Burton started guiltily; there was no need to ask who had knocked, the sound had been too peremptory.

The next instant Miss Patricia stalked in.

She was frowning and yet she carried a large tray of hot chocolate.

"Vera, please go into the dining-room and bring in the wafers you will find there," she demanded, always preferring Vera's aid to any one of the other girls. "Naturally the maids are in bed and asleep at this hour of the night. No other Camp Fire guardian than Polly Burton would have permitted you to remain until nearly morning. I suppose I shall have to allow all of you an extra hour of sleep."

Still grumbling Miss Patricia set down her tray, allowing the girls to serve themselves, while she pretended to ignore Mrs. Burton's apology.

"I am sorry, we had no idea it was so late. You are right, Aunt Patricia, I suppose I shall never make a really satisfactory guardian, no matter how many years I have the honor. But don't you think we get on fairly well with you to supervise us? I wish you had heard our discussion to-night! We have many new plans and no one can say what rich experiences may not develop through them. At least we shall keep busy while we await the dawn of peace!"

Miss Patricia's grim expression relaxed slightly.

"Certainly if peace of the kind we hope and pray for, Polly Burton, ever arrives upon this earth, it will be a peace which passes many people's understanding at the present time."

A few moments later, placing her arm about Mrs. Burton with an unconscious display of tenderness, Miss Patricia led the way toward bed.

CHAPTER XI

A Day in Paris

A FEW days later the Camp Fire girls and their chaperons motored from Versailles into Paris for the day.

The little town of Versailles, once famous as the abode of royalty, is only a short distance from the French capital and easily reached by street car or automobile.

As Mrs. Burton, Miss Patricia and the entire group of girls started off together, they composed a somewhat formidable party. Their plan was to spend a few hours together and later to separate to fulfill a number of different engagements.

There was a particular reason for today's excursion, which took place upon a Saturday forever to be remembered. The Supreme Council of the Peace Conference was to have its first meeting.

Although the Conference was not to assemble until afternoon, by twelve o'clock the Camp Fire party found the streets

crowded with sight-seers, soldiers and civilians, men and women of many nations.

Foreigners who had been living in Paris during the four years of the war, with Germany sometimes knocking almost at her gates, had found a new characteristic in the Latin city. The Paris of the first few days of the great war, with her sudden burst of passion and unrestraint, had altered to a soberer Paris. Calm under attack, even under apparent defeat, she had given the world an extraordinary example of courage and steadfastness.

As Paris had borne her discomfiture, so she bore her present triumph.

Today the girls were surprised to find how little excitement there seemed to be in spite of the number of people to be seen.

The Allied representatives, who formed the Supreme Council of the Peace Conference, were to have a warm and hospitable welcome from the citizens of Paris. But there was no evidence of the spontaneous joy and enthusiasm which had greeted President and Mrs. Wilson several weeks before upon their first arrival in the city.

After an early luncheon the Camp Fire

party went directly to a house near the Quai d'Orsay where Senator Duval had secured them seats upon a little balcony overlooking the bridge and the long windows of the "Salle de la Paix," in the French Foreign Office, where the formal opening of the Conference would take place.

From their places on the veranda they could look down upon the spectators swarming back and forth, but restrained by the double line of French gendarmes who were to keep the streets clear for the approach of the delegates.

The winter afternoon was unexpectedly brilliant with a clear blue sky and bright sunshine. Far up and down the River Seine were the series of beautiful bridges which connect the two sides of the City of Paris. Little boats were riding peacefully at anchor near the quais. Glancing upward one beheld the skyline of the golden and white city. As many of the houses and public buildings of Paris are built either of white stone or yellow cement, Paris often appears white and gold in the sunlight.

"Do you think we will be able to recognize the delegations as they drive toward

the Foreign Office?" Peggy Webster inquired a little breathlessly. In spite of her ordinary self control she had lost her usual color and was pale with emotion.

Betraying a good deal of only partially suppressed excitement herself, Mrs. Burton smiled and nodded in response.

"I think you and Bettina and I shall at least recognize President Wilson. Aunt Patricia is such a partisan of the French, she is probably more interested to discover Clemenceau, France's remarkable old Premier, who is known as 'The Tiger.' But look!"

It was now quarter of three o'clock.

At this moment a carriage was seen to drive up before the steps of the Foreign Office. The troops began blowing a fanfare of trumpets. The carriage stopped and several small men in black frock coats got out. These were the Japanese delegates to the Conference. They were followed by the Siamese and then the East Indians in their picturesque turbans.

Suddenly one appreciated the Allies in the great European war had not been merely the four nations which had borne the

brunt of the fighting. They represented eighteen nations from every quarter of the globe; for the first time in the world's history they were to meet this afternoon in the interest of a world peace.

Later other delegates continued to arrive, the Camp Fire girls leaning perilously over their balcony to watch them, Miss Patricia and Mrs. Burton crowding close behind.

All at once a different emotion swept over the crowd in the street.

Bettina Graham turned to clutch Mrs. Burton by the arm.

"President Wilson!"

There was no need for her explanation. At this instant the American girls were convinced that the fanfare of trumpets was expressing a more ardent welcome. Everywhere faces had brightened, women were seen holding up their babies in their arms. The people in the streets and from the windows of the houses nearby, were making *more* of a demonstration.

Through thè clear air, loud shouts were resounding, "Vive le Wilson! Vive le Wilson!"

A tall man, holding a top hat in his hand,

and with his hair almost white, smiled and bowed. A moment later he also disappeared up the steps of the French Foreign Office.

Ten minutes after, at exactly three o'clock in the afternoon, the French President Poincaré made his appearance.

When he entered the Foreign Office the outside doors were closed.

Almost immediately the crowds in the streets began to disperse.

The French President was to make an address of welcome to the visiting delegates. It might be hours before the famous guests to the French capital would again reappear in the streets.

"Do you think we had best wait here sometime longer until the way is clear, Aunt Patricia?" Mrs. Burton inquired. All of us have a number of important matters to attend to before we return to Versailles, but I am always afraid of crowds!"

"Then you should never have set foot in Paris today. I told you that you were not strong enough," Miss Patricia returned unsympathetically. "So far as I am con-

cerned I am obliged to be off at once. Sally, I believe you wish to come with me. Bettina, you and Alice Ashton and Vera are to go with Marguerite Arnot to meet several of her friends. I believe, Peggy, that you and Mary Gilchrist are to remain with Yvonne and have tea with some acquaintances of hers. Polly, as usual you have an appointment alone. Remember you are to be responsible for three of the girls and I will meet the others. We are all to be at home for dinner in Versailles this evening at seven o'clock."

As if she were a Major-General, having issued her command Miss Patricia, followed by Sally Ashton, departed.

A few moments later the others went down into the street together, but separated beyond the bridge. Mrs. Burton, Yvonne, Peggy and Mary drove away in one direction, while the other girls, climbing into an ancient horse cab, moved off toward one of the poorer neighborhoods of the city.

Half an hour they drove through the narrow, winding streets of the Latin quarter, the three American girls fascinated by the unique scenes, which were a matter of

course to Marguerite Arnot, who had spent years of her life in this vicinity.

Along the route were numerous small art shops filled with posters, some of them continuing to represent war and others the approach of peace. The posters were painted in bold, crude colors, or else in pastels. The figures were sometimes bizarre and sometimes beautiful, but always they were unusual, since the French artist has an unusual gift for poster work.

At one of the small art shops, Bettina insisted that they dismount for a few moments. She had spied a poster in the window which she wished to purchase for Mrs. Burton. Oddly the figure of the woman, although symbolizing France, was not unlike Mrs. Burton. The drawing represented a woman dark and slender, with a small head and heavy black hair, with delicate and large, expressive eyes. In the drawing the woman had gathered into her arms the children of France. Above the woman and children, seated at a small table, were a group of men who were supposed to be writing the terms of a new world peace. The idea of the poster un-

doubtedly was that no matter what the peace terms might be, France would continue to protect her children. It was entitled "Glorious France."

Beyond this art shop, a few blocks further on, Marguerite Arnot ordered the cab to stop before a house where lived the friends to whom she was to introduce the three American girls.

Bettina stopped to pay the cabman, who was the typical French cab driver in a tall battered silk hat, the girl drivers having nearly all disappeared soon after the signing of the armistice.

The other girls went on and stood at the door talking to the concierge.

Instead of joining them at once, Bettina stood hesitating at the edge of the sidewalk. Never before had she beheld such a street, or such a house as they were about to enter! The street was narrow and dark, the house had a grey, poverty stricken look and was curiously forbidding. There were no people near save a few old women talking together.

Then Bettina secretly reproached herself for her own absurdity and false attitude.

Marguerite Arnot had explained that the

old house where she had once lived and where her friends were still living, was in one of the humblest quarters in Paris. The girls were able to support themselves only in the poorest fashion by being apprenticed to French dressmakers.

Bettina Graham really had no sense of superiority because of her wealth and social position. Never for a moment did she forget that her own father had been an extremely poor boy who against every family disadvantage had worked his way to a distinguished position.

When she did finally reach the other girls, who were still talking to the concierge, she had still to fight an uncomfortable impression. Undoubtedly the concierge was a strange and unpleasant looking old woman. She was tall, with a dark, thin face, heavy eyebrows which were turning gray like her hair, and eyes with a peculiar searching expression.

Apparently she was pleased to see Marguerite Arnot again, as Marguerite had lived in her house until Miss Patricia Lord had insisted that she come to live with her at Versailles.

The next moment Bettina was the last of the small procession of four girls to mount the tenement stairs.

The stairs were dark and windowless, but Marguerite Arnot led the way without faltering. Finally she knocked at a door on the third floor.

The next instant the door being opened, the Camp Fire girls and Marguerite entered a large, bare room. Inside the room, and evidently expecting their arrival, were six young French girls, most of them younger than the American girls.

They were all dressed in black so that the effect upon first meeting them was depressing. But Marguerite had previously explained that the girls had been made orphans by the war.

They were living together in a single apartment in order to make a home for themselves with the least possible expense.

Two of them were sisters, the others were not relatives, but acquaintances and friends whom a common need had brought together.

Only a few months before, Marguerite Arnot had first made their acquaintance.

At the time she had occupied a small room alone just across the hall and, as she was both ill and lonely, the entire number of girls had been wonderfully kind to her. It was therefore natural that Marguerite should at once think of these girls as forming the nucleus for one of the first Camp Fire units in Paris.

The room had evidently been hastily gotten ready for the visitors. Nearly all the shabby furniture, except a few chairs, had been pushed back into dark corners.

At once the American girls felt the room to be bitterly cold, colder than the outside as it had no sunshine. The French girls were evidently accustomed to the temperature. Never at any time are the houses of the French, even the wealthy homes, warm enough for American ideas, and during the war fuel in France had become an impossible luxury for the poor.

Marguerite Arnot immediately appreciated the situation. At present the open fireplace was filled only with odd pieces of old paper and cardboard.

Soon after she held a little whispered conversation with one of the youngest of the girls.

A moment after the girl disappeared to return a little later with a tiny bundle of sticks and a small pan of hot coals which she had secured from the concierge.

Therefore, it was actually Marguerite Arnot, who, kneeling down before the tiny grate, lighted the first Camp Fire among the French girls in Paris.

Having studied French all her life, gaining her first lessons from a French governess in her childhood, Bettina Graham spoke French fluently. Alice Ashton's French had been largely acquired at school, nevertheless she had learned a fair amount of ordinary conversation after the last year's residence in France.

With Vera Lagerloff the effort to talk freely in a foreign tongue would always remain difficult. But then she was not given to talking in her own tongue to the same extent as the other Camp Fire girls, always preferring to listen if it were possible.

Today she decided that her position as a silent onlooker might prove especially interesting.

Discovering that there were an insufficient number of chairs for them all to be

seated, Bettina had introduced the subject of the Camp Fire by explaining their custom of seating themselves in a circle or semi-circle upon Camp Fire cushions. Naturally, as they had no cushions at present, the floor would serve.

Bettina then lighted the three candles she had brought with her for the purpose explaining their meaning, Work, Health and Love. She also recited in French the Camp Fire desire.

It was Vera Lagerloff's opinion that Bettina Graham possessed a greater gift at all times for explaining the purposes and ideals of the American Camp Fire organization than any one she had ever heard, except their own Camp Fire guardian.

This afternoon she appeared particularly interesting and enthusiastic.

In talking before a number of persons Bettina had an odd fashion of forgetting the shyness which so often overwhelmed her in meeting strangers.

How often Bettina and Vera, so different in temperament, in tastes and opportunities in life, in the last few years of membership in the same Camp Fire group, confided their secret ambitions to each other.

Vera was at present recalling Bettina's confidence as she watched her explaining the American Camp Fire mission before the group of young French girls.

Disliking society Bettina had insisted that she never wished to marry or at any time to lead a society life. Instead she meant to find some cause which would be of especial importance to women, devoting her time and energy to it.

Why should this not be Bettina Graham's future? It was the life of a few exceptional women, and Bettina might be one of them. The fact that she was his daughter and not his son need not prevent Bettina from inheriting her father's gifts.

Vera was interested to observe the impression that Bettina was at this time making upon her small audience.

The French girls were unusual types in Vera's knowledge. They must have ranged from about twelve to sixteen or seventeen years of age. But their faces were older than American girls of the same age. Their figures also looked more mature in their plain well fitted black dresses. Then, in spite of their poverty, they had the unmis-

takable French air and a style which was peculiarly their own.

But with their thin, sharply pointed faces, sallow complexions and dark hair, in Vera Lagerloff's opinion, they were not a pretty collection of girls. The exceptions were Marguerite Arnot and a girl who seemed to feel an extraordinary attachment for her.

Since their entrance into the room, except for the few moments when she had disappeared in answer to a request from Marguerite and had returned with the material for the fire, she had not left Marguerite's side.

At present she sat clutching the older girl's skirt as if she never wished her to escape.

To the group of American girls with whom she was at present making her home, Marguerite Arnot represented both a novelty and an enigma. They knew little of her history, as she showed no desire to talk of herself, save the few facts Miss Patricia had seen fit to tell Mrs. Burton, with the idea that she repeat them.

Marguerite and Miss Patricia Lord had met originally in a dressmaking establish-

ment in Paris. At that time Miss Patricia was having the costume made which she had worn at her dinner party and which had been such a revelation to her family. Marguerite, when about to try on Miss Patricia's dress, became unexpectedly ill and fainted during the process; otherwise Miss Patricia might never have taken the slightest notice of her. She took Marguerite to her home and there, finding that she lived alone and had no one to care for her, the eccentric but kindly spinster assumed the responsibility. Later, Marguerite had been invited to Versailles as a working member of Miss Lord's present household.

There was no question of the French girl's refinement, or of the undoubted talent she possessed. But of her character, the hopes, ambitions and ideas which compose a human personality, the Camp Fire girls understood but little.

She had explained that her mother had been an artist and her father a lawyer in a smaller city not far from Paris. Her father died when she was only a tiny girl, leaving his family penniless, and her mother had attempted to make their living with her art.

But either artists were too numerous in Paris, or else her mother had possessed insufficient ability, for after a year or more of hopeless struggle, she had devoted her attention to dressmaking.

In this she had been successful; for nearly as long as Marguerite Arnot could remember, she had been able to assist her mother with her work, sitting by her side as a tiny girl she had pulled out bastings and hemmed simple seams. In spite of their poverty she and her mother had been happy together.

Then the war had come and they had been among its many unheeded victims. With almost no work, with the added strain and sorrow, Madame Arnot's health had given way, so that in the second year of the war Marguerite had been left to struggle on alone.

What she had suffered through loneliness and poverty in these last two years, probably she did not like to discuss.

There were traces of struggle in the face which Vera Lageroff was now studying, as she beheld it upturned toward Bettina, listening intently to Bettina's speech.

Marguerite's face was a pure oval, her eyes large and gray with heavily fringed dark lashes and her complexion so colorless at present that her lips seemed unusually red in comparison. The expression of her mouth was a little sad, although she seemed at the moment wholly absorbed either by Bettina Graham's words or by her manner.

The younger girl, beside Marguerite, was thin and dark with brilliant black eyes set in a sharp almost too clever little face.

When she occasionally glanced toward Bettina, her manner was more resentful than admiring.

Yet when Bettina had finished speaking, it was Julie who asked the first question.

"Then if we start a Camp Fire group of our own, you will invite us to your house at Versailles where Marguerite Arnot is living?" she demanded so unexpectedly that Bettina, a little amused and a little surprised, could only reply:

"Why of course, I should be glad for you to come in any case, and I intended to ask Miss Lord or our Camp Fire guardian to invite you. But you must only organize a Camp Fire if the ideas which I have

explained so inadequately in any way interest you."

Bettina then turned to the older girls in the room. Nevertheless she had realized that Julie Dupont, in spite of her youth, was an undoubted force among them. Even as she had talked she had been able to observe the young girl's sharp and not altogether pleasing personality.

The next moment Bettina added:

"I wonder if all of you *can* come out to our house at Versailles next Saturday afternoon, a week from today? I know you are only free on Saturday. Our Camp Fire guardian, Mrs. Burton, wishes very much to know you and will write you a more formal invitation. Miss Arnot, will you please persuade your friends to come."

Fortunately the other girls required no urging, but if influence had been necessary, it was Julie Dupont, who was seldom without the resources to accomplish her own purpose.

CHAPTER XII

Peace

IN spite of Miss Patricia Lord's many kindnesses, had one been spending this particular afternoon with her, as Sally Ashton had voluntarily chosen to do, she would not have appeared in a benevolent light.

Miss Patricia was fatigued, both from her excursion into town and from the excitement of the scene she had just beheld. She was also bent upon a disagreeable errand, having chosen this afternoon to find out why the supplies she had ordered from the United States months before to aid in the relief work in one of the devastated Aisne districts had not been heard from.

To more than one of the French officials, whom she interviewed, Miss Patricia openly declared that she believed her supplies had arrived, but were being purposely kept from her.

Unfortunately Sally Ashton had not inquired what Miss Patricia's quest was to be upon this afternoon, when she had chosen her companionship in preference to the Camp Fire girls. It was one of a number of bonds between Sally and Miss Patricia that they seldom annoyed each other with questions. Since their retreat to Paris from their farmhouse, Sally considered that the other members of her present family had spent too much of their time and energy in unnecessary interrogation of her. It was useless to protest that there was no secret reason for the change which they persisted in discovering in her. Once before, under pressure of circumstances, she had kept her own counsel, hence the impression that she was probably doing the same thing a second time.

On this winter afternoon Sally at first followed Miss Patricia upon her warlike errand with patience and good humor.

Whenever it was possible they walked to their destinations, Miss Patricia both abhoring and fearing the reckless driving of the ordinary Parisian cabman.

At one or two places, in spite of her de-

termination not to be drawn into Miss Patricia's difficulties, Sally found herself obliged to explain to the clerks from just what grievance the irate American spinster was suffering. Miss Patricia delivered her harangues in English regardless of the fact that the French clerks were oftentimes unable to understand a word of what she was saying.

However, during one of these interviews, when Miss Patricia was expressing herself with especial violence and Sally vainly struggling to quiet her, they chanced upon an official who not only understood Miss Patricia's language, but appreciated the essential goodness of the woman herself. After all Miss Patricia's anger was due to the fact that she believed the French children and old people in her chosen district on the Aisne were suffering for just the supplies she had ordered for their relief. Her resentment was not occasioned by any personal discomfort.

The French official explained to Miss Patricia that if she would kindly drive to a freight office at some distance away and show her bill of lading, there was a possi-

bility they could tell her whether or not her shipment from the United States had ever reached France.

On this excursion Sally positively declined to walk. Moreover, it was growing late and Miss Patricia was herself obliged to acknowledge that the distance was too great. They therefore secured a cab in which Miss Patricia agreed that she was willing to risk her own life, although reluctant to trust Sally's.

Finally, after a little uncertainty on the part of their driver they reached the desired office.

Here, Miss Patricia found some one who appeared willing to listen, first to her complaints, and then to make the necessary effort to help her out of her difficulty.

But this effort, Sally Ashton soon discovered, was to require some time. She was now feeling a little exhausted, the air in the express office was heavy and filled with strange odors, the office which was near the Seine was in a crowded down-town section of the city.

Sally touched Miss Patricia on the arm. "Aunt Patricia, I want to get out into the

fresh air for a few moments. You won't mind if I wait for you outside?"

And seeing that Sally looked pale and a trifle harassed, and also appreciating her former patience, Miss Patricia nodded, without ceasing her conversation with the French clerk.

The view beyond the office door was more entertaining than Sally had anticipated on their arrival. One had another outlook on the Seine. Barges and other large river boats, loaded with supplies, were moving slowly up or down. Queer people in odd picturesque costumes were standing here and there in little groups talking to each other in the animated Latin fashion.

Of course there were occasional soldiers; they were everywhere in Paris.

Within a few moments Sally became interested in several soldiers who were chatting with some French women. One of them, in a United States uniform, moved off alone, as if he had only stopped to ask a question.

He was coming in Sally's direction.

Without being aware of what she was

doing Sally had wandered several yards away from the office door where she originally had intended to remain. Now she went back to its shelter. Here, although she was still able to watch the street, she was not so conspicuous.

A young French officer was also approaching and walking in the opposite direction toward the American.

Sally paid but little attention to either of them until she noticed them stop and almost immediately begin talking to each other in angry tones.

Then curiosity drove her forth from her shelter a second time.

What difficulty between the two men could have occurred in such a short space of time? They could hardly have exchanged a dozen words with each other before the quarreling began. Certainly they were both too angry to pay the slightest attention to her!

She was standing almost within half a dozen yards of them. Then Sally recalled Mrs. Burton's suggestion that the Camp Fire girls try to become an influence for peace if they observed a misunderstanding between Allied soldiers.

THEY WERE BOTH TOO ANGRY TO PAY THE SLIGHTEST ATTENTION TO HER!

As Sally had a matter-of-fact appreciation of the difference between idealistic theories in life and their practical application, which was rather unusual in so young a girl, it occurred to her at this moment to contemplate how extremely angry her Camp Fire guardian would be, should she attempt to speak to the two soldiers who were strangers to her. Reflecting upon Mrs. Burton's disapproval should she adopt this method of following her advice, Sally's brown eyes brightened, one of her infrequent dimples reappeared.

Then her expression changed; in spite of her momentary frivolity she was beginning to feel seriously troubled.

The two soldiers, one a French officer, the other an American private, had neither separated nor ended their misunderstanding.

Sally was only a girl, and one who expended little energy in thinking of the larger problems of life, yet she appreciated that at this time any disagreement between France and the United States in the settlement of the terms of peace would be a political calamity. Surely, any personal

difficulty between a French and an American soldier was likewise a misfortune. One did not like to think that men who had been lately united against a common enemy and fighting for a common ideal could so soon quarrel with each other.

She moved a little nearer. She then saw the American soldier raise his arm as if intending to strike his companion, she also saw that the French officer either had forgotten the fact that an officer does not strike a private, or else preferred to ignore it.

Involuntarily Sally called out her feeble protest. No one heeded her. However, the officer, who was older, at the same moment evidently appreciating that he must not participate in a street fight, turned and without another word to his companion moved away.

He came back toward Sally Ashton.

This time she studied him more attentively. The French officer was young and of medium height with fine dark eyes and a rather prominent nose.

"Lieutenant Fleury!"

Sally extended her hand.

"How strange to meet you here in Paris

so unexpectedly! Your sister, Yvonne, thinks you are with the French Army of Occupation. At least this is the last news I heard of you. Small wonder I have been so interested in watching you for the last few moments. I must unconsciously have realized that I knew you!"

The young officer flushed.

"I wish you had *not* seen me in these last few minutes. But perhaps you were my good angel, although I was as unaware of your presence as I was at the time you nursed me back to health in the ruined château near your old farmhouse. At least I was preserved from striking an American soldier! I do not see now how I could so far have forgotten myself! Will you wait here a short time until I am able to find him and apologize. I believe the fault was entirely mine, although at the beginning of our conversation I thought he said something discourteous about the French people. No, my sister does not know I am in Paris. I hoped to come out to Versailles tomorrow to see her and her friends and to explain."

The French officer swung round, only to

find the young American soldier standing within a few feet of him.

"I am extremely sorry, sir," he began, "I believe I was rude, but I have been in a prison camp in Germany for the past few months and I am afraid I have rather lost my nerve. I have been asking a simple question for the past hour until I was under the impression that no one was willing to tell me what I wished to know. After all perhaps no one has understood!"

For a moment, while Lieutenant Fleury was endeavoring to make his own apology, Sally Ashton stood quietly regarding them both.

The following moment she was standing between them.

"Dan Webster, perhaps you will allow me to introduce you to Lieutenant Fleury, since I have the honor of knowing you both. Certainly I never expected to see either of you. Come home with me to Tante and Peggy, won't you, Dan? They both think you are still a prisoner in Germany, although we have been hoping for word of your release each day."

Subtly the tones of Sally Ashton's voice

had changed, her manner had grown gentler.

Ever since they were children, because of the close intimacy between their families, she and Dan had known each other. Two years before they had spent the summer in camp together "Behind the Lines" in southern California. Soon after, Dan, who at the time was too young for the draft, had volunteered so that they had not met since then.

At present Sally was not greatly puzzled by her own failure to recognize Dan Webster until he was sufficiently near to have a close look into his face.

The Dan she remembered had been unusually tall and vigorous, with broad shoulders and a heavy, muscular frame. This Dan was extremely thin with stooping shoulders, his ruddy skin an ugly yellow pallor.

He also appeared confused by Sally's unexpected greeting.

"I say, it is good to see some one I know once again," he murmured a moment later. "I have had no letters from home in months and did not understand that you and Tante and Peggy were still in France.

I do hope you are going to be able to give me a great deal to eat. I was trying to find a restaurant where I could get something like an American meal when your friend and I came rather close to a misunderstanding."

By this time Dan was smiling, displaying his strong white teeth, and the deep blue of his eyes, which with his black hair was the family characteristic of both his mother and her twin sister, Mrs. Burton.

However, at this instant, Miss Patricia, coming out of the express office to seek for Sally, at once assumed command of the situation.

CHAPTER XIII

A Pilgrimage Into France's Holy Land

IT was natural that David Hale, one of the young American secretaries of the Peace Conference, should come frequently to the charming house filled with American girls at Versailles.

Having won both Mrs. Burton's and Miss Patricia Lord's favor, he had been cordially invited. He had also plenty of time as his duties by no means kept him constantly engaged.

It was during the first week of March and President Wilson having returned to the United States for a brief period, there was a temporary lull in the activities of the Peace Conference.

One morning, opening a note at the breakfast table, Miss Patricia Lord frowned and glanced over toward Mrs. Burton. At the same instant the Camp Fire guardian was reading a letter of her own, and although aware of Miss Patricia's gaze,

made no effort to return it, or reply in any fashion.

Under the present circumstances, which she chanced to understand, the first remark must emanate from Miss Patricia.

"Young David Hale has written me to say that if we like he has been able to obtain permission for us to make a day's journey along the edge of one of the French battlefields. I presume this may be partly due to the fact that I told him the other evening it was my intention to devote the rest of my life and fortune toward helping with the restoration work in France. I also told him that it was probably my wish to erect a monument to the heroes who died for France near one of the battlefields, although I did not say what the character of the monument would be," Miss Patricia declared, finally breaking the silence.

"Do you mean that it may be possible for any of the Camp Fire girls to make the journey with you?" Bettina Graham demanded impetuously and then subsided, observing that Miss Patricia was not in a mood at present to open a discussion with her.

"Yes," Mrs. Burton returned quietly, "it sounds like a remarkable opportunity, Aunt Patricia. I have a letter from Senator Duval saying he has been pleased to use his influence to accomplish what Mr. Hale requested. And, although the French Government is not for the present permitting tourists to journey over her battlefields, a special concession has been made in view of your services and your desire to aid France. Senator Duval would like to travel with us, as it is necessary we should have a Frenchman of authority and influence as our companion. I suppose you do not mind, Aunt Patricia, as there is no danger from a German shell these days and I shall try to keep out of trouble?"

Refusing to reply to Mrs. Burton's final remark, Miss Patricia arose.

"We are to leave Paris at five o'clock next Thursday morning and travel a number of hours by train. When we arrive at our first destination an automobile belonging to the French government will meet us. We will then motor to whatever portion of the battleground we are to be permitted to see. Our party can be made up of six

persons. This will mean, besides Mrs. Burton and myself, four Camp Fire girls.

"Polly, kindly decide who the four girls are to be."

And Miss Patricia Lord departed, leaving Mrs. Burton to a by no means simple task.

Notwithstanding, it was finally arranged that Bettina Graham, Peggy Webster, Yvonne Fleury and Marguerite Arnot should compose the number, two of them Americans and two French girls.

Six days later, in the darkness and cold of an early spring morning, the party of six women, accompanied by the French Senator and David Hale left Paris, arriving a little before noon at a French wayside station where the line of railroad communication direct from Paris had never been destroyed throughout the war. Awaiting them was not one but two motors, each containing a French officer as well as the chauffeur. Into one Miss Patricia Lord, Bettina Graham, Marguerite Arnot and David Hale entered and the other was filled by Mrs. Burton, Senator Duval, Yvonne Fleury and Peggy Webster.

By noon a little pale March sunshine

had come filtering through the clouds, faintly warming the earth.

A curious scene surrounded the wayside station. Stacked in long lines down the road leading from it were broken and disused cannons and machine guns, German and French. There were also giant piles of steel helmets, pieces of shell, twisted and rusted bayonets, all the tragic refuse of a cleared battleground after the fury of war has passed.

The spectacle was too grim to inspire much conversation.

Further along there were open spaces which showed where the French and American camps had stood behind the fighting lines. But the tents themselves had been folded and the paraphernalia of life moved on with the Army of Occupation to the left bank of the Rhine.

In the present vicinity there were no birds to be seen, no trees, no signs of vegetation, only the desolation which follows on the heels of war.

Bettina Graham, who was sitting next David Hale in the rapidly moving French car, shivered and clasped her hands tightly together inside her fur muff.

"Is this your first visit to the devasted French country, Miss Graham? I wonder if you won't regret the trip? It does not seem to me that girls and women should look upon such things as we may see today, except of course Miss Lord, who appears to have a special reason. Yet she insists as many Americans as possible should visit the French battleground later when peace is declared. Not until then can they realize what France has endured. I don't know whether I agree with her."

Bettina smiled, but not very gaily.

"After all you realize, Mr. Hale, that your opinion will not affect Aunt Patricia. And we of course have seen portions of the devastated French country in our work on the Aisne, but nothing like this."

In the few weeks of their acquaintance David Hale and Bettina had become fairly intimate friends. Indeed the young man had confided to Bettina his ambition for the future. It seemed that he had not a large fortune of his own, yet nevertheless wished to devote his time and energy not to the mere making of money, but to becoming as he expressed it, "a soldier of

peace" serving his country in times of peace as a soldier serves her in war, for the honor rather than the material gain. He had been working in a diplomatic position in Washington before the entry of the United States into the war and because his work was considered of too great importance to resign, he had not been allowed to enter the army. Sent afterwards to France on a special mission he had been retained to serve as an under-secretary of the Peace Congress. At present David Hale believed that his future might depend upon the reputation he acquired among the older and more celebrated men with whom he was associated.

And for the first time in her life Bettina was enjoying an intimacy with a young fellow near her own age who was interested in the things in which she was interested.

Without being handsome David Hale had a fine strong face with interesting dark gray eyes and a smile which illuminated his entire expression.

During the next quarter of an hour he and Bettina talked but little, the greater part of the time listening to the French

officer who was describing to Miss Patricia the fighting which had taken place in the neighborhood.

"It was here that the German troops broke through three times and three times the French with one half their number repelled them. It is possible, Madame, that the French government might be willing to allow a portion of this ground to be used for a monument should you or your countrymen and women desire so to honor France."

But Miss Patricia answered nothing.

They were approaching a piece of ground which had once been a field, but now instead of the bare and upturned soil one saw little mounds and wooden and iron crosses set in long uneven rows. Springing up amid the crosses were crocuses, the first shoots of hyacinths, of narcissus and daffodils.

The Frenchmen and the young American removed their hats.

"A bit of France's holy ground," the French officer again explained to Miss Patricia. "Over in that field are buried the Allies, whom no difference of opinion,

no unfaith can ever estrange, Americans, British and French are sleeping side by side."

It must have been through Mrs. Burton's request that at this moment her motor which was in advance halted and its occupants climbed down.

"Senator Duval wishes to see if a friend of his lies here, Aunt Patricia," Mrs. Burton explained.

She then turned to Senator Duval:

"No, I would rather not look with you if you don't mind. Some of the others in the party will wish to. I find it too saddening to see more than one must."

Just beyond the hallowed ground there was a little hill, which by some strange freak of circumstance was covered with a group of young fruit trees which had escaped the surrounding devastation.

Mrs. Burton, Miss Lord, Yvonne Fleury and the two French officers moved over toward this hill and climbed to its summit.

The others followed Senator Duval upon his quest. Purposely Bettina Graham had separated herself from David Hale, allowing him to take charge of the young French

girl, Marguerite Arnot. Several times Bettina had believed they seemed unusually interested in each other and it was not her idea in any way to demand too much of the young man's attention.

"From here one has a surprising view of the French country," Captain Lamont, who had been Miss Patricia's guide, explained.

"Over there toward the southeast is Château-Thierry and not far off the Forest of Argonne. I wonder if you know that until the American soldiers fought so gallantly and so victoriously in this same forest of Argonne it had been thought throughout all French history an impossible place of battle. So you see you came, saw and conquered," the French officer finished gallantly.

"Nonsense!" Miss Patricia returned in her fiercest manner. "The one thing I am most weary of hearing discussed is which of the allied nations won the war, as if one had a greater claim than the rest, save the claim that France has of having lost more of her men."

"Polly Burton," suddenly Miss Patricia

seemed to have forgotten the rest of her audience, "I have been thinking not only today but for many days what character of monument I should like to be allowed to build in France. Probably the government may not permit me to do what I wish, but the idea I have been looking for has come to me, come from that resting place of the allied soldiers over there."

And Miss Patricia waved her hand toward the burying ground.

"Here I should like on this very hill top to build a home for the children of the soldiers who have died in France, a home where they may live, play and work together, speaking the same languages, thinking the same thoughts. We are struggling for a better understanding, a deeper unity between the allied nations. It can come best through the children whose fathers have died for the same cause. After we grow old I fear many of us learn nothing and forget nothing. And I should like to inscribe above the door of the home I shall build 'Glorious France, the Battleground of Liberty.'"

Then a little abashed of her outburst

and scarcely conscious of the importance of her suggestion, Miss Lord turned and went her way apart from the others. She was not to know at that time how her idea spoken with such impulsiveness and with her usual generosity was later to bear richer fruit than she then dreamed.

However, neither Mrs. Burton, the two French officers, nor Bettina and Yvonne failed to realize the significance of her utterance.

CHAPTER XIV

Foundation Stones

SOME days later a number of guests were entertained informally by Miss Lord at her house in Versailles. The trip into the French country had been depressing and if Miss Patricia's ideas for future work in France were still a little far distant, this was not true with the plans of the Camp Fire girls.

For weeks they had been meeting other groups of girls in the city of Paris and interesting them in their program for establishing a French Camp Fire organization. They had written to the central organization in the United States asking them to get in touch with the French for a mutual exchange of ideas. Moreover, Mrs. Burton had also persuaded a woman of unusual charm and high position to take over the work of the French Camp Fire and become its first guardian.

But the group of girls who were invited

by Miss Lord to her home at Versailles were the original group of poor French girls who were Marguerite Arnot's friends.

Miss Patricia also suggested to Yvonne Fleury that she include her acquaintances in the same invitation.

"As a matter of fact, Yvonne," she insisted, "if democracy is to be the order of the day, I don't see why we should not try to practice it among the groups of Camp Fire girls. I've an idea poor girls may be more in need of just the help the Camp Fire can give than the rich. Also I would like to see a little more democracy practiced in our own household at the present time. You girls and Polly Burton must remember that I was once as poor a girl as one could find in the county of Cork and that is saying a good deal. No one need think I forget it! Now I have no mind to be spoiling any of you by our own fine living for the next few months. This is merely my way of celebrating the dawn of peace and perhaps of rewarding you girls for the sacrifices you made during the war. But if your friends, Yvonne, think they are too fine to meet Marguerite Arnot's friends and

to be members of the same Camp Fire group, then in faith I shall have nothing to do with them and never want them in my house! Of course you may do as you like, Yvonne. Don't ask them to come here if you think they will object to meeting Marguerite, her friends or me. Neither be a telling of them that Polly Burton is a famous actress and so making them wish to come for that reason. A famous actress Polly may be, but she is often an obstinate and mistaken woman."

Without allowing Yvonne opportunity to reply, which was altogether like her, Miss Patricia then withdrew.

Nevertheless, Yvonne thought she understood Miss Patricia's point of view. She also recognized the difficulty which lay behind it.

Originally there had been a mild argument between Mrs. Burton and Miss Patricia on the question of introducing Marguerite Arnot into their Camp Fire family at Versailles. Mrs. Burton was not stupid enough to find fault with Marguerite's occupation; she had always insisted that she had made her own living by acting

from the time she was a young girl, and that therefore persons who felt a sense of superiority to other working women, must also feel superior to her. But she did consider that Miss Patricia had not sufficient knowledge of Marguerite Arnot's character, or of her previous associations to have so soon invited her into their household. She should have waited until she learned to know her more intimately. There was a possibility that Marguerite herself might not be happy with them under the conditions Miss Patricia had arranged. Her presence might in some way affect the complete happiness of the Camp Fire girls.

But Miss Patricia had prevailed, and Yvonne was fairly well able to guess what she must have said to her adored but often thwarted friend.

"You yourself, Polly Burton, invited Yvonne Fleury into our Camp Fire family when you met on shipboard and knew nothing but what she chose to tell you of herself. You likewise extended the same invitation to Mary Gilchrist. I made no objection. Please remember that Marguerite Arnot is now my choice."

And of course, since the house at Versailles was Miss Patricia's and since Mrs. Burton's objection had not been a serious one, Miss Patricia had had her way.

Up to the present time, Mrs. Burton would have been the first person to acknowledge that she had found no criticism in Marguerite Arnot's behavior. Never had she showed the slightest effort to take advantage of Miss Patricia's kindness. Moreover, Mrs. Burton, and each one of the Camp Fire girls, had personal reasons for being grateful to her. She had made several of the girls prettier clothes in the last few weeks than they had ever possessed in their lives.

And she always seemed to make a special effort in her work for Mrs. Burton.

So Yvonne went away to her room where she wrote notes asking her four girl friends, who formed the nucleus of another French Camp Fire unit, to luncheon on the following Saturday. She had sufficient faith to believe they would not feel as Miss Patricia had intimated and her faith was justified.

Mrs. Burton had invited as her guest, Madame Clermont, who had promised to

take charge of the Camp Fire organization in France. Madame Clermont was in reality an American woman, but she had lived long in France and both looked and talked like a French woman, so that it was difficult not to think of her as one. As a matter of fact she had studied music in Paris for fifteen years and sung at the Opera Comique before marrying a Frenchman.

She and Mrs. Burton had known each other slightly for some time, but their acquaintance had developed into a friendship in the interest of the new Camp Fire movement for French as well as for American girls.

In the original plan for Miss Lord's luncheon party, there had been no idea of including any masculine guests. As a matter of fact in a somewhat skilful fashion they invited themselves. But since Miss Patricia did not refuse to allow them to be present, she must really have desired their society.

After meeting Sally Ashton so unexpectedly in the streets of Paris, Dan Webster had returned home with them for the evening, but later had received official

permission to spend several weeks with his sister, Peggy Webster, and his aunt, Mrs. Burton, in the interval before going home to the United States.

Dan was ill from starvation and from his long confinement in a German prison. Mrs. Burton therefore thought it best that he secure a room in their immediate neighborhood and have his meals with them.

This arrangement did not please Miss Patricia, who appreciated the embarrassment of including one young man in a family of girls. However, as Dan was Mrs. Burton's nephew and assuredly needed care, she had made no protest.

Later, as usual Miss Patricia had devoted herself to spoiling Dan rather more than any one else.

On the day of her luncheon it was Dan who pleaded that Aunt Patricia allow him to appear. Otherwise he was sure he must suffer with hunger through a long winter day. No food to be had at any restuarant could compare with Miss Patricia's. As Miss Patricia agreed with him in this and her own housekeeping was one of her vanities, Dan had been the entering masculine wedge into the luncheon party.

The fact that Dan Webster must not be the only man present, had been Lieutenant Fleury's plea. Besides, he and Miss Patricia were such old friends, after his visit to her at her farmhouse on the Aisne, that Lieutenant Fleury had protested he could not endure to be cut off from Miss Patricia's society for a single day

Hearing of Dan's and Lieutenant Fleury's good fortune, David Hale had simply looked at Miss Patricia with such unuttered reproach, that she really did weaken to the extent of inviting him.

"Young man, I presume you think one more guest cannot make any difference when I have already asked twice as many people as my house can accommodate. You are mistaken. Nevertheless, come along to lunch if you like. No one will have enough to eat, but I would have you on my conscience if you should feel hurt at being left out. Not that you would have the faintest right to be hurt, David Hale. You are absolutely nothing to any of us except a new acquaintance."

After arguing that he was really a great deal more to her than a mere acquaintance,

but that Miss Patricia was so far unwilling to acknowledge it, David Hale appeared at the hour of the luncheon with as much cheerfulness as if he had been the most sought after of all the guests.

Following a buffet luncheon, at which the three young men had proved themselves extremely useful in helping to serve the guests, who could not be seated at the table, they were invited to go away until after a meeting of the Camp Fire.

At the present moment it was four o'clock in the afternoon and the Camp Fire ceremony had ended.

The girls were talking together in small groups, Miss Patricia was not in the room, Mrs. Burton and Madame Clermont were arranging for an engagement for the theatre in Paris.

"I wonder if you would mind singing for us?" Mrs. Burton asked. "Please don't if it would trouble you. But I've an idea no one of the girls here has ever heard so beautiful a voice as yours!"

Madame Clermont smiled.

"Of course I shall love to sing. As a matter of fact I have been wounded that

you have not asked me before. So it does not require one half that Irish flattery of yours to persuade me! Have you any of your Camp Fire music here with you?"

The next half hour the Camp Fire girls listened for the first time in their lives to the Camp Fire music sung by a great artist.

In the meantime Miss Patricia wandered back into her drawing room, bringing with her the three young men whom she had found in hiding in her little private sitting room on the second floor of the house.

Later Miss Patricia asked for the final song. Madame Clermont had just announced that she could sing but one more song.

"Then do sing something more adapted to your voice. This Camp Fire music is fanciful and pretty, but it is intended for young girls and not for you," Miss Patricia commented with her usual directness.

"Hasn't some one written a song of peace? We have heard enough of the Hymn of Hate for the past four years?"

Madame Clermont, who evidently understood and was amused by Miss Patricia's plain speaking turned at once to answer.

"No, Miss Patricia, I have not yet learned a new hymn of peace. We must wait until peace actually arrives before the great song of it can be written. But I would like you to give me your opinion of a song I have just set to music. The verses I found in a New York newspaper and think very wonderful. They tell the story of the visit of a King to France in the old days and then of the coming of our President. I hope you may at least admire the poem as much as I do, even though I may have failed with the music."

Madame Clermont's voice was a mezzo soprano with a true dramatic quality. Into her present song she put the emotion which France and America had been sharing in the past few weeks.

THE OLD REGIME

The banners breast the boulevard,
The crowds stretch gray and dim;
The royal guest nods lightly toward
The folk that cheer for him.

The King sets out his troops to show
The envoy speaks him fair;
His eye, it never wavers from
From the soldiers marching there.

Oh, its gold lace and blue lace
And troops in brave array;
And it's your heart and my heart
Must bleed for it some day.

The Hostess-Queen is fair tonight,
Her pearls burn great and dim;
The visitor bows low upon
The hand she proffers him.

The King's old crafty counselors
Sit at the banquet late,
Their secret compact safely signed
And sealed with seals of State.

Oh, it is one year or two years,
Or twenty years or ten,
Till in the murk of No Man's Land
We'll pay—we common men.

The New Day

The folks outsurge the boulevard;
Without a crown or sword,
A plain man greets the crowds today—
They wait a plain man's word.

The hoarse and harrowed peoples wait;
For they and theirs—the dead—
Have all the savings of their hope
With dim deposited.

A democrat, a democrat
Rides with the Kings today:
And can it be the people's turn,
And must the rulers pay?

Having finished Madame Clermont came and stood before Miss Patricia.

"I hope my song was not too long and that I have not bored you. Thank you for my charming afternoon. I hope I may come to see you at some other time."

Although intending no ungraciousness, Miss Patricia did not reply, instead allowing Mrs. Burton to answer for her. And this was because on one of the few occasions in her life she was permitting herself the enjoyment of a few, hardly wrung tears. Madame Clermont's song had stirred Miss Patricia's gallant spirit, with its warm sympathy and love of justice.

CHAPTER XV

An Intimate Conversation

"DO you like it here, Marguerite? Are you never lonely for the little room in the old house in Paris?"

Marguerite Arnot was seated before a window of a sunny room on the third floor of Miss Patricia's house in Versailles. The walls were papered with a bright paper, the furniture covered in French chintz and on the table nearby were a heap of soft materials of many colors.

Marguerite was sewing on a piece of blue chiffon. She lifted her eyes from her work to smile on the younger girl beside her who was also occupied in the same fashion.

"Lonely, Julie, for the tiny quarters and the darkness and the dilapidated old house? No, cherie, I am never lonely for unlovely things. But sometimes I do feel lonely for you and for Paris, perhaps because I do not altogether belong here amid so many

girls who are strangers to me and amid a greater luxury than I have ever known."

With a little sigh half of regret and half of physical content, the girl dropped her sewing into her lap for a moment, to gaze admiringly about the charming room.

"I am beginning to enjoy the wealth and beauty and ease too much, Julie. I do not like even to confess to you how I shall regret having to return to the old struggle when the home here is closed and Miss Lord goes back to the devastated French country to continue the reclamation work there. That is what she looks forward to doing. This house was rented only for a season as a holiday place for herself and her friends. When summer arrives and the Peace Conference is probably over, I shall have to go back to the old life in Paris. Still, Julie, you need not look so unhappy! The life we lead is no more difficult for me than for you and indeed as I am older, it should be less so!"

Marguerite Arnot's present companion was the young French girl, Julie Dupont, to whom the Camp Fire girls had been introduced some time before when Julie was

living with a group of friends in a tiny apartment in Paris. During the past few days the young girl had been sharing Marguerite's room in Miss Lord's home in Versailles.

Upon learning that Julie, who had always been her devoted friend and admirer, had lost her position and was also ill, Marguerite had decided that she must return to Paris to care for her. Her other friends were too much occupied and Marguerite also understood they could scarcely afford for Julie to continue as a member of their household unless she were able to pay her share of the expenses.

Having saved a little money of her own from the generous sum Miss Patricia paid for her work, Marguerite felt able to bear the responsibility. There was no bond between her and Julie save one of affection, due chiefly to the younger girl's ardent attachment, nevertheless Marguerite acknowledged its claim.

Miss Patricia, when Marguerite attempted to explain the situation, at first had declined positively to release her from her obligation. Afterwards Miss Patricia

invited Julie to spend a few days with her friend while she recovered her strength.

Yet at present it appeared that the brief visit might lengthen indefinitely, Miss Patricia having since decided that Marguerite had too much sewing to accomplish alone and that Julie must remain to assist her.

It developed later that the young French girl's illness had not been serious. Indeed Marguerite had suspected that it might have been partly due to design. So fervently had Julie desired to see her again, that the illness had doubtless been exaggerated in order to accomplish her purpose. Before this occasion Marguerite had reason to believe Julie's methods in achieving her purposes were not always perfectly scrupulous.

Now the young girl shook her head with rather an odd expression on her face. It was a clever face and might have been a beautiful one save that it was too thin and sallow and almost too clever. It was perhaps the cleverness of a child who has had to depend too much upon her own resources with no family and few friends to feel an interest in her.

"I don't see, Marguerite, why you speak of returning to Paris unless you like! The life is harder for you than for me for a number of reasons which we both understand without having to discuss them. Besides, I shall not go back unless you do. I shall always find some reason why we should continue to live together."

If Marguerite Arnot was not especially pleased by this intimation, she merely smiled:

"I wonder if you would mind informing me, Julie, how I shall manage not to return to my former work in Paris? I certainly hope to be sufficiently fortunate to find persons there who will allow me to sew for them. You and I know no other trade and I don't think either of us is about to inherit a fortune."

With a quickness and dexterity, suggesting a kitten leaping at a ball, Julie, threading a fresh needle, plunged it into her sewing.

"No, you have not yet inherited a fortune, but you have had an old woman, said to be fabulously wealthy, take an immense fancy to you. I think, Marguerite,

that unless Miss Lord does something really worth while for you, you will have managed very badly. She may make you her heiress."

The older girl frowned.

"Don't talk childish nonsense, Julie, as if you had only read fairy stories. Besides, you make us both appear very ungrateful. You must realize that Miss Lord cares more for Mrs. Burton than any one in the world. Moreover, there were seven other girls living in her home before her eyes ever rested upon me. Perhaps one of them would be equally willing to inherit her fortune. Vera Lagerloff is poor and Miss Patricia is particularly fond of her. Vera has told me she expects to remain with Miss Lord in France and return with her to the reclamation work. Besides I really do not think that Miss Patricia displays the slightest sign of surrendering her fortune to any one just at present. Let's talk of something else."

Holding up to the light the piece of blue chiffon upon which she was sewing, Marguerite studied it for a moment her attention absorbed by what she was doing.

Julie stopped her work to look at her.

The afternoon sun shone on the older girl's heavy dark hair, revealing the pure oval of her face, her clear, white skin, the delicate pointed chin and large grey eyes.

Julie then fell to sewing again more rapidly than before.

"Oh well, I don't see why I am not allowed to say what I wish! There is no harm. You are always too afraid of realities, that is why I do not think, Marguerite, that you are suited to making your own way. But of course, any one who is as pretty as you are, is sure to marry fairly soon, so I suppose I need not trouble about your future!"

This time Marguerite Arnot, in spite of her annoyance, laughed.

"See here, Julie, what a ridiculous child you are. Some of the time you are so wise that one forgets you are only fourteen. Yet you are old enough to understand that I can never marry. In the first place even in ordinary times no French girl marries without her dot and I have nothing. Besides, the war has destroyed nearly a million and a half of our men. If I pos-

sessed a dowry perhaps I might some day marry a wounded soldier in order to care for him; I suppose a good many French girls will do this. I do not think I altogether envy them."

"There are other men to marry beside Frenchmen. I heard the Camp Fire girls talking the other night and they declared no American ever expects his wife to have a dowry unless she happens to be extremely rich in her own right. Even when the parents are wealthy, they rarely give their daughters anything until their death. I have been thinking recently that perhaps a good many of our French girls may marry American soldiers. Indeed I know a few of them who expect to do this. I rather think I should like to marry an American!"

"Well, suppose you do not discuss the subject for another four or five years, Julie," the other girl answered, perhaps a little primly. "So far as I am concerned I wish you would not talk of it at all."

"Oh, very well, Marguerite Arnot, but it is because you care too much and not too little," Julie responded. "What shall

we talk about? I can't sew without talking. Why not tell me all you have been able to find out about the Camp Fire girls? I don't presume it is very much, but at least it will be enough for me to start on and I can find out the rest later."

Marguerite sighed, shaking her head in a discouraged fashion.

"Julie, I wish you had known my mother for a few years of your life! She would have been able to teach you what I do not seem to succeed in accomplishing. Yet there are some things one cannot teach a human being, one ought to know them instinctively. And these are the things you so often do not know, Julie, that I can't tell where to begin with you. But then you have never had any kind of training. Still I shall of course be happy to tell you what I know of the Camp Fire girls since it is only what they have wished me to know."

Julie shrugged her thin little French shoulders.

"Don't worry about me, Marguerite! If I never knew my own mother, I had a clever enough father until the war took

him from me. So far as the Camp Fire girls are concerned I am not wishing to discover their secrets. You are not fair to me!"

"Then I am very sorry," the other girl replied. "With whom shall I begin? Bettina Graham's father is a United States Senator living in the city of Washington. Her mother is very beautiful and an old friend of Mrs. Burton's. Bettina is not wealthy as Americans think of money, but she is wealthy of course as compared with us. Peggy Webster is Mrs. Burton's niece, the daughter of her twin sister, and Peggy is engaged to marry the young American lieutenant, whom she knew long ago, when the Camp Fire girls spent a summer near the Arizona desert. I only know what Peggy told me of this herself. Her home is in New Hampshire, where her father owns a large farm. They are not wealthy, Peggy insists, although the young man whom she is to marry has a great deal of money in his family. Sally and Alice Ashton are sisters, unlike as they seem to be, and their father is a physician in Boston. Yvonne Fleury, you know, is a French girl and her

parents are dead. She has only her brother left since the war, which killed her mother and younger brother. But you have heard all this before. She and Lieutenant Fleury own a château near the Marne. Mary Gilchrist is an only child and her father has an immense ranch somewhere in the west. Vera Lagerloff's people are poor farmers. There, have I left out any one or told more than I should? I scarcely know, Julie. I am tired so you will have to let me be quiet for a little while. I know you have not the faintest understanding of half I have told you. How much United States geography did you ever study at school? I am ashamed of the mistakes I have been making recently."

Not interested in her own ignorance but in her own wisdom, Julie for the moment made no response.

A few moments later, following a knock at the door, a trim French maid entered to say that Miss Patricia desired the two girls to stop their sewing and to go for a walk.

Really it was a puzzle to the various members of her household, the fashion in

which Miss Patricia, although apparently occupied with a variety of other concerns, was at the same time able to keep a careful watch upon the welfare of every member of her household. If now and then she was something of a tyrant, at least she had the happiness of her subjects nearer her heart than was her own happiness.

Downstairs, Julie and Marguerite discovered Bettina Graham and David Hale waiting for them. Two or three of the other girls, with Dan Webster and Lieutenant Fleury, had gone on ahead.

"We are going to the park and have our walk there. I thought perhaps you would like to go with us," Bettina Graham explained.

She turned to her companion.

"You see, Mr. Hale, since my escapade, the other girls in our household have had to suffer for my sins. We are no longer allowed to go any distance from home by ourselves."

A quarter of an hour later, the little party reached one of the entrances to the great park.

It was now early springtime, the horse chestnut trees were beginning to show

green spars on their gray branches, a few of the early shrubs were about ready to blossom.

The President of the United States had again returned to France and once more the peace sessions were holding daily meetings in Paris.

The great Palace of Versailles was still closed. Indoors, however, a spring cleaning was undoubtedly taking place, since the world was at present hopeful that the peace terms would soon be announced and the German envoys invited to France for the signing of the treaty.

At this hour of the afternoon the park was open to the public and a number of persons of varied nationalities were walking about, probably representatives to the Conference and their friends who had come out to Versailles because of the beauty of the spring afternoon.

As the three girls and David Hale entered the park near the Baths of Apollo, Bettina Graham slipped her arm through Julie's, dropping a little behind in order that Marguerite and David should be able to walk together.

She had been talking to David Hale during their ride on the car and for a few moments while they were awaiting the other girls.

It had struck her that he had watched Marguerite Arnot with a good deal of interest and must therefore wish to be with her.

"Are you so familiar with the park here at Versailles that you have grown tired of it, Julie?" Bettina Graham asked. "I sometimes wonder if it interests French people as much as it does Americans. You have such wonderful parks in Paris as well! But come, let us stop here a moment and look at the view."

A little distrustfully the young French girl regarded Bettina, having not the least understanding or appreciation of the American girl's character, her generosity and straightforwardness.

Julie wished Marguerite to have the opportunity to talk with David Hale alone, since it fostered a certain idea she had been cherishing of late. Yet she did not wish altogether to lose sight of them.

"I have never been to Versailles until

my visit to Miss Lord and I have never seen the park until this afternoon," Julie answered a little sullenly.

It was impossible that the two girls should immediately understand each other, separated as they were by race, education and opportunities. Yet as Bettina was the older, the fault was perhaps hers.

Julie appeared to Bettina more of a child than she actually was, only too unchildlike in certain details, because of having had to depend too much upon herself. The younger girl's personality was really not pleasant to Bettina and she had an odd distrust of her. But this she would not have confessed at this period of their acquaintance even to herself.

She especially hoped to be able to make friends with Julie, feeling that she would particularly like to interest her in the Camp Fire.

"Well, you could scarcely see the park at a more interesting time than this afternoon!" Bettina replied, feeling a little ashamed of the fact that it had not occurred to her that Julie had probably been too poor all her life even for this short excursion from Paris to Versailles.

The two girls were now at the end of the Royal Walk. Beyond them, between long avenues of budding trees, they were able to behold the great Palace, pale yellow in the afternoon sunlight. Nearby was a statue of the Car of Apollo, the Sun God, rising from an artificial lake, his car drawn by four bronze horses.

At this moment, Marguerite Arnot and David Hale, were signaling to them. Julie and Bettina walked on toward the others.

This afternoon all the fountains in the park at Versailles were playing.

"Don't you think, Mr. Hale, this is just as interesting a scene as any in the eighteenth century when all the fashionable world of Paris used to come out here? Still I should like to have seen the costumes of those days, the women in their hoop skirts and later in the fashions of the Empire, the men with their satin coats and knee breeches."

The four of them were standing still at the moment Bettina made her little speech. She then turned to Marguerite Arnot.

"You see, Miss Arnot, Mr. Hale and I have both been reading a history of France

in the eighteenth century which he was kind enough to lend me. That is why I am talking in this learned fashion. Perhaps you would like to read it later?"

Marguerite nodded, as David answered:

"Thought we had agreed, Miss Graham, that Versailles is more interesting at present than at any time in its history.

"I have been trying to recall a few lines of the verse you composed the other day 'Now one knows of the foolishness of kings, one learns a new respect for common things.' Still one can but wonder if a new and democratic world will ever create any place as magnificent as this great park? Remember, you have promised me, if I can obtain the necessary permission, that you will go with me some afternoon to the Queen's garden, where we had so unexpected an introduction to each other. You should have chosen a warmer night for your adventure. How lovely it must be when the flowers and shrubs are in bloom!"

Bettina flushed and laughed.

"Don't talk of my adventure; I shall always be ashamed of my curiosity and

my stupidity, also of being thought to be either an anarchist or a spy. Perhaps I shall not be able to keep my promise. Who knows whether I shall ever be allowed inside the little garden again!"

This afternoon Bettina was wearing a bright blue cloth coat with a collar of moleskin and a newly purchased French hat, which had the air of having been designed especially for her. Her eyes were clear and brilliant with interest in her companions and their extraordinary surroundings; her color was deeper than usual, her fair hair, suggesting the familiar phrase, encircled her small head like a crown.

Marguerite Arnot smiled, although not unconscious of the contrast between her own simple black costume and Bettina's, and of the deeper contrast in their two lives.

"In spite of Miss Graham's objection to kings, I believe her family and friends oftentimes call her 'Princess'."

This time Bettina really was embarrassed.

"Please don't hold me responsible. I only owe that title to the fact that my

father used to tease and flatter me by allowing me to play I was the little princess of the fairy stories we used to read together. No one has less right to the title!"

Weary of Bettina's appearing the center of the attention, Julie now made an effort to draw her away.

"You promised to show me more of the gardens, Miss Graham. Please let us walk on toward the Fountain Gardens. Marguerite and Mr. Hale will follow or else we can come back here for them," she pleaded.

During the remainder of the afternoon Julie managed to remain always with Bettina, keeping her separated from any intimate conversation with David Hale.

CHAPTER XVI

Another Afternoon in Paris

ON this same day Sally Ashton and Dan Webster spent the latter part of the afternoon together in the city of Paris.

They had started out with the others, but before they had walked more than a few blocks from the house, Dan joined Sally who was beside her sister and Lieutenant Fleury and deliberately interrupted them.

"I say, Sally, I want you to go into Paris with me for the afternoon. I have an especial reason. Oh yes, I realize it isn't considered the thing to do in France, but you and I are like brother and sister. Besides I asked permission and Tante wishes you to go."

Dan's bluntness, his boyish straight forwardness were a trifle annoying, nevertheless, after a little demurring and a slight shrugging of her shoulders, Sally agreed.

She was looking a good deal better than

she had in some time past; there was more than a hint of the former and more familiar Sally in the mischievous gleam in her brown eyes and in the fleeting suggestion of dimples in her more rounded cheeks.

And the change had been gradually taking place in Sally ever since the day of her meeting with Lieutenant Robert Fleury and of Private Dan Webster on the streets of Paris.

Since childhood Dan and Sally had known each other, had played together when Mrs. Ashton brought her two little girls to the old Webster farm in New Hampshire, near the original Camp Fire grounds.

As, at the time of Dan's invitation, they were not far from the railroad station, in something over half an hour Sally and Dan had reached Paris.

"I thought we would drive out the Champs Elysee and into the Bois, Sally," Dan explained, signaling a cab, as soon as he had guided his companion out of the crowd and on to the edge of the sidewalk.

"It is such a beautiful afternoon I don't want you to miss being out of doors. And

as I want to have an intimate talk with you, this would seem about as good an opportunity as we can ever have."

Nodding her agreement, Sally allowed Dan to assist her into the dilapidated cab with as much grace and dignity as if she had been entering a royal coach. But Sally was the type of girl who very much enjoyed men wait upon her and take care of her in the small matters of life; although perfectly capable of caring for herself, she had too much wisdom always to reveal it.

Settling back now into the seat of the cab Sally remarked amiably, as she was feeling in an unusually cheerful frame of mind:

"Well Dan, what in the world can you have to talk to me about that requires all this secrecy? All I can say is that you are looking fifty percent better than when I discovered you. So please remember if you have anything unpleasant to say that you owe your improvement to me."

In spite of the fact that Sally was talking in this agreeable fashion, Dan was perfectly aware that at the moment she was paying but little attention to him, or to what he might possibly be going to say.

They had reached the Champs Elysees and were now moving on toward the Arc de Triomphe. Down the broad avenue the "marrons," or horse chestnut trees were green if not yet in bloom, while apparently every person of leisure who was not visiting the park at Versailles this afternoon was driving out toward the Bois.

"Perhaps we had best wait and I'll explain what I wish to say after we have enjoyed our drive for a little while," Dan replied wisely.

Therefore he and Sally discussed only casual matters for the next quarter of an hour. But finally, when they had passed under the Arc and were in the Bois, the wooded park on the outskirts of Paris, Dan remarked without further preparation:

"Sally, I want you to promise me to go back to the United States and to your own people at the earliest opportunity. I have been watching you pretty carefully ever since our unexpected encounter a few weeks ago and I never saw a girl more changed than you have been by your work in France. It is true you are looking a little better today, but that is because you are

entertained for the time being. When no one is supposed to be paying any attention to you, you appear terribly depressed. As a matter of fact, Sally, you are not the type of girl who should ever have come over to do war work. The fellows have all said that some of the girls had better have stayed at home and made bandages and knit socks."

At this Sally appeared deeply hurt.

"You are not kind, Dan, even if what you say is in a measure true. Recently it has seemed awfully difficult for me to take the proper interest in the work of organizing the Camp Fire in France, as the other girls are doing. But I think if you ask Aunt Patricia or Tante, they will both tell you that I tried to do my share of the work at our farmhouse on the Aisne. And don't you think my returning home at once is a question for Tante or for my mother and father to decide?"

Dan Webster was one of the fortunate persons who was rarely troubled by indecision.

In answer to Sally's question, he shook his head positively

"No, I don't. In the first place your mother and father are not here and so are unable to see what a difference there is in you. Tante is one of the most charming persons in the world, but I have never thought her remarkable for good judgment. Besides, Sally, you must not consider that I intend being rude or unkind to you. It is really because I have always been fonder of you than of most girls, that I take the trouble to interfere. I don't mean that you have not done your best in France and I don't mean that your work hasn't been jolly well done, and of course you have always gotten on with fellows and understood them better than most girls. I was thinking more of the effect upon you of what you have seen in France during the war. I have seen enough myself, never to expect to be exactly the same again, but somehow a man does not want a girl he is fond of saddened, especially when she is so young and such a gay little thing as you used to be. I am pretty stupid at trying to say things, Sally, but I wish you to know that Tante and I had a talk about you and she told me to go ahead and see

if you would confide in me. She says she has noticed that something has been the matter with you for a long time and your friends have seen it too. But you have never told her or Alice what troubled you and apparently, if there is anything serious the matter, you have only talked to Miss Lord."

At this instant and for the first time during his long speech Dan hesitated and colored hotly.

He was a splendid looking young fellow nearly six feet high with shining black hair and deep blue eyes. Ordinarily he had a brilliant color, but at present his complexion had not recovered from the long months spent in a German prison.

"Is there anything I can do, Sally? Oh, I might as well speak plainly, I don't know how to speak in any other way. My sister Peggy told me that you had nursed that French lieutenant, Lieutenant Fleury through an illness of some kind months ago and that a few of the girls believe you care more for him than you would like people to know. That is why I wish you please to go on back home, Sally.

You are too young and you are an American girl and he is a Frenchman, and oh, I should hate it, Sally! Forgive me, you know I want to do what your brother would do under the same circumstances, we have known each other so long and you have no brother of your own."

Sally stopped gazing at the scenery at this moment and turned her golden brown eyes to stare into Dan's blue ones.

There was a mischievous gleam in their centers and yet oddly there was also a suggestion of tears.

"But I have had another offer of a brother, Dan, oh, not so very long ago! Lieutenant Fleury also suggested that he would like to be a brother to me. I don't like being ungrateful, but I declined. Really so long as fate sent me no real brother I don't think I care for an adopted one.

"Just the same, Dan dear, don't feel I do not appreciate what you have just said. It is true I have never been happy since our retreat to Paris. I am not in love with Lieutenant Fleury, no one need worry over that possibility, but something did happen on the way here which might

not have affected any one else seriously, but which I have never been able to forget. You cannot forget the sights and sounds of a great battle, neither can I forget what I saw and heard on our retreat to Paris.

"I saw poor old women and children dying from cold and hunger and babies as well. I saw them being driven a second time penniless and broken from their little homes. Yet it was not these things altogether, Dan, it was something else."

Along the seat Sally slid her small hand until it was held comfortingly in Dan's large one.

"I think I would like to tell you, Dan, perhaps it would be easier to speak to you than anyone else and afterwards I shall feel happier.

"One night on our way to Paris from our farmhouse, Aunt Patricia and Vera Lagerloff and I discovered a young girl, not perhaps as old as I am, sitting alone by the side of the road.

"When Aunt Patricia spoke to her, she did not answer, or even look at us. Then Aunt Patricia got down from her wagon and spoke to the girl and asked if she

could help her. She found that the girl could not speak and so we took her into the wagon with us."

Sally's voice shook a little and she looked so particularly soft and childlike that Dan would have given a good deal to have been able to comfort her at the instant.

Nevertheless he did not interrupt, knowing it was best that Sally be allowed to tell her story in her own way.

"For some strange reason the girl we were trying to be kind to took an extraordinary fancy to me. If Vera or Aunt Patricia asked her a question, she seemed terrified, but she sat for hours as we jogged along the road with her hand in mind and her eyes staring tragically toward me.

"By and by she began to be able to talk to me, just a few words at a time. Toward night she was so weak and ill that Aunt Patricia was frightened, so we halted at one of the deserted French villages and found an old doctor, too old to serve at the front, who was doing his bit for France by treating the refugees as they journeyed on to Paris. He told us that our young French girl had received a terrible nervous

shock, perhaps a long time before. He also told us that she was extremely ill, dying from exhaustion and perhaps from other things that she had suffered. So that night we delayed our trip and in the night the girl died. She died with her hand in mine and before she died, Dan, she was able to talk and told me what she had endured. Do you wonder that I do not want to talk of it? I suppose I would have told Tante except that she has been ill and I did not wish to make her unhappy. But of course I can never feel just the same, although I suppose after a time I'll forget a good deal. You are right, Dan, I do not believe I was really fitted for the work here in France, I was too selfish, too self absorbed and worst of all I knew too little of life. Oh Dan, I can never bear to live in a world again where there is another war.

"But please do let us talk of something else now and never mention this subject again."

Taking out of her pocket book an infinitesimal handkerchief, Sally now dried her eyes and the next moment pointed toward a small house a few yards from the road.

She Was Able To Talk and Tell Me What She Had Endured

"Dan, please go in there and get me some tea and cakes wont you? I am dreadfully hungry. It is a funny thing about me and always amuses the other Camp Fire girls, but it makes me dreadfully hungry to be unhappy. No, I would rather not go with you, we might stay too long and must be in Versailles again before dark."

In the interval while Sally waited alone a carriage drove past and in the carriage was a tall man with a serious, kindly face, whom Sally recognized at once. Beside him was an attractive middle aged woman with shining brown eyes and hair.

Instinctively Sally bowed and smiled, her lips unconsciously framing the names: "President and Mrs. Wilson."

Then as they both returned her greeting, a little prayer went up from the girl's inner consciousness, that this great man who so desired the future peace of the world, might be able to help in bringing it to pass.

CHAPTER XVII

An Unexpected Intrusion

ONE morning about two weeks later Bettina Graham entered her Camp Fire guardian's small private sitting-room bearing a note in her hand.

The sitting-room adjoined Mrs. Burton's bed-room and was at the front of the house on the second floor. Indeed the two rooms were the choice ones of the entire house so that Mrs. Burton had objected to Miss Patricia's not occupying them herself. The house was her's and she was also the oldest member of the household.

However, Miss Patricia had at once protested that not only were the rooms not particularly desirable, but that they were too cluttered with artistic paraphernalia for her to endure living in them. She had then established herself in a severely plain bed-room on the third floor, after having a great part of the furniture which the room

had previously contained removed to other bed-rooms.

Knowing that Miss Patricia would probably not have been comfortable amid her present surroundings, afterwards Mrs. Burton allowed herself the privilege of thoroughly enjoying them.

The two rooms evidently had been designed for a woman of luxurious and exquisite taste. The walls of both rooms were of a delicate robin's egg blue with panelings of French oak. The furniture was of French oak upholstered in the same shade of blue tapestry and the curtains were of heavy, blue satin damask.

Mrs. Burton was curled up in a large blue chair, writing a letter upon a portfolio which she balanced shakily in her lap.

"I was afraid you might be Aunt Patricia, Bettina. She would undoubtedly reproach me for writing a letter on my lap instead of upon that ornate desk in the corner so plainly intended for the purpose. Don't tell on me, I know it is reprehensible, but I have always hated doing the right things in the right places at the right time.

"My husband is unhappily aware of this

trait of my character. I am writing him now. He joins us in a short time and I expect to go to England with him on a government mission before we sail for home. We may be in England for months. I wonder if you Camp Fire girls would like to spend the summer with us? Aunt Patricia will soon return to the devastated French country to continue the reclamation work there. Her whole thought is absorbed in it, and I believe Vera Lagerloff and Alice Ashton wish to return with her.

"But pardon my talking at such length, Bettina. Was there not something you specially wished to say to me?"

Mrs. Burton straightened herself in her chair trying to appear in a slightly more dignified attitude, and quite unconscious of the small spot of ink which decorated one of her cheeks.

She was also wearing a faded blue cotton morning dress, which she had formerly worn at the farmhouse on the Aisne, which was entirely unsuited to her present surroundings. But she had dressed in a hurry and had forgotten to change her costume.

Bettina smiled.

"It is all right, Tante, I won't tell, only let me take care of your portfolio while I talk to you and please don't allow Aunt Patricia to see you in your present toilet. She is too funny! She used to be so extremely severe in the past over any expression of frivolity, either on your part or on ours. Now she seems to wish us to keep perfectly dressed all the time, so as to be in harmony with this lovely house I suppose! Besides, you know she insists that since your maid, Marie, left you finally to marry Mr. Jefferson Simpson, after having refused to consider him in their early acquaintance in the west, that you are unable properly to take care of yourself. This is an unfortunate reputation for a Camp Fire guardian! I won't keep you a moment; I only want you to read this note from Mr. Hale. He has written to say that he has written for permission for us to visit the Queen's little secret garden a second time and this time will you please come with us? You will, won't you, Tante? I want to see the garden again and I would not wish to go alone with Mr. Hale and would rather have you with us than one of the Camp Fire girls."

Before replying Mrs. Burton looked at Bettina searchingly. Bettina was older than the other Camp Fire girls, not so much in years as in certain phases of character, although in others she was peculiarly candid and childlike.

Ever since their original meeting David Hale had been a frequent guest at Miss Patricia's home and although on extremely friendly terms with the entire group of American Camp Fire girls, it had seemed to Mrs. Burton that he appeared to have an especial liking for Bettina. Yet Mrs. Burton could not be sure; of late she had observed him talking to Marguerite Arnot as frequently as to Bettina.

At present there was nothing in Bettina's expression in the least self conscious or confused.

"Why don't you answer, Tante? Would you rather not join us? I think it will be worth while. The little garden has haunted me, even after seeing it on a winter day, with the promise of what it might be in the springtime!"

Mrs. Burton gave a tiny, impatient shake to her shoulders.

"Why of course, Bettina, I want to go with you; haven't I answered you? I am really anxious to see the little secret garden and would have been envious of you had you gone without me. Put down Mr. Hale's note, I will read it later. I must have Captain Burton's letter ready for the next post."

And Bettina departed, having placed her letter, which she had taken out of its envelope and left half open upon Mrs. Burton's table in the center of her sitting-room.

After she had gone, Mrs. Burton finished her own letter, then dressed and went downstairs for a walk. She did not regard the reading of Bettina's note from Mr. Hale as of immediate importance, as she already knew its contents.

Five minutes after Mrs. Burton's departure, some one else knocked at her door. When there was no reply from the inside it was slowly opened. This was not an intrusion; the young French girl, Julie Dupont, had been told to leave Mrs. Burton's gown in her room, even if she were not there to receive it.

These instructions had been given Julie by Marguerite Arnot, who had been altering a costume which Mrs. Burton had said she wished to wear later in the day.

"Therefore, there was no objection to Julie's entering the sitting-room, or having entered it, to stand quietly in the room and study it in detail.

By a chance the little French girl, who was the latest addition to Miss Patricia Lord's household, had never been in Mrs. Burton's room before. Now its luxury and typically French appearance, fascinated her. It was true that Julie had seen such rooms before; she had not been apprenticed to a fashionable dressmaker without having been sent on errands which had taken her to French homes of nearly the same character as Miss Lord's present temporary one. But Julie was too intensely French herself to find their fascination grow less.

At present she appreciated details in the furnishings of the sitting-room as no one of the American Camp Fire girls could have appreciated them. As Julie's eyes swept from the beautifully shaded blue

walls to examine each separate article of furniture, her eyes rested upon the note to Bettina in David Hale's handwriting. She recognized the writing. He had recently loaned Marguerite Arnot books in which he had written his own name and a few lines as well.

Julie was able to read only a very little English which she had acquired at school.

Nevertheless, she at once picked up the letter, with an expression of eager curiosity.

To her surprise she first discovered Bettina's name. She had not anticipated this, presuming the note had been written to Mrs. Burton. Instantly she became more interested.

The note was also written in French and not English.

Julie devoted no time to puzzling over this fact. However, the explanation was simple, Bettina and David Hale had been studying French together and therefore David had written in Frenc..

At first Julie read the note idly, but with no compunction, and without even glancing toward Mrs. Burton's door as if she were fearful of interruption. She really scarcely

appeared, to appreciate the fact that one did not read a note addressed to another person without that person's consent. Later she grew more absorbed.

But to understand the young girl's apparent lack of principle, one needs to know something of her history and also of the state of mind which her stay in Miss Patricia Lord's household had engendered.

Julie's mother had died when she was a baby; after a careless fashion she had been brought up by her father, who was a Bohemian and ne'er-do-well. Never for any length of time had her father worked long at any task, or Julie been sure of sufficient food. But always she had shared her father's confidence and a certain shallow affection and had never criticized or reproached him. Indeed, he was the only person for whom she had ever cared until after her father's death when she had first learned to know Marguerite Arnot.

When war was declared, Robert Dupont, Julie's father, had gone off to fight and had been killed in so gallant a manner at Verdun, that one must forgive his weaknesses.

Yet can one ever escape the consequence

of weakness? Julie had been left behind, without training, without a natural sense of honor, to repeat his mistakes, unless some one would help her to a new ideal of life. So far there had been no such influence for good in the young French girl's life.

Marguerite Arnot, Julie cared for devotedly, nevertheless, although this may not have appeared upon the surface, of the two girls Julie Dupont possessed the stronger nature.

Meeting by chance in the tiny hall between their two apartments in the old house in Paris, it was Julie who had first made the advances. It was Julie who had done more for Marguerite's happiness and comfort than the older girl had done for her. Instinctively Julie had recognized that while Marguerite was beautiful and gentle, she was not strong and needed some one to care for her. And Julie had always cared for her father; after his death her strong, clever, but misguided nature had really required some one upon whom she could lavish her affection.

In her friendship with Marguerite Arnot,

Julie's dreams of the future, absurd and fanciful as dreams often are, were always for Marguerite's future and not for her own. Believing Marguerite beautiful and charming enough for the most fortunate experience, and yet without the ability to fight for herself, Julie had come to regard herself in the light of Marguerite's fairy godmother. As soon as possible she must manage to rescue her from the hardships of her present life. Marguerite was nineteen and sufficiently old for a change in her fortune. Yet Julie's romantic promptings toward arranging for her friend's future were of the vaguest character, until her visit in Miss Patricia's home and her meeting with David Hale.

She had not dared speak of her dream openly to any one, least of all to Marguerite Arnot. Yet daily as she sat at her sewing Julie had entertained herself with the thought of Marguerite and David Hale learning to care for each other and the happy future they might spend together.

There had been no foundation for her fancy beyond the fact that David had seemed interested to talk to Marguerite

and had admired her beauty and gentle manners. However, Julie knew nothing of the frank and friendly attitude which is a matter of course between young people in the United States. Her only annoyance was, that David Hale appeared equally interested in Bettina Graham.

After reading Bettina's note, instantly Julie decided that Bettina and David Hale must not visit the Queen's garden unless Marguerite Arnot accompanied them. The fact that Marguerite had not been invited might have appeared as an obstacle to most persons, but not to Julie.

Her plan was conceived at once undeterred by the necessity for falsehood. She would go and tell Marguerite Arnot that Bettina and David Hale desired her to join them for the afternoon's expedition to the Queen's secret garden at Versailles.

Julie Arnot was a student of human nature. Discovering that Marguerite believed herself to have been invited and was eager for the pleasure, neither Bettina nor David would be sufficiently unkind to reveal the truth.

CHAPTER XVIII

One Afternoon

IN her surmise as to what would actually occur as the result of her design, Julie Dupont was not far from the truth.

First Marguerite accepted the reality of her invitation, which Julie explained she had been asked to deliver, with openly revealed pleasure. Expressing her thanks to Bettina, Bettina received the impression that Mrs. Burton must have asked Marguerite, having decided that four would make a pleasanter number for their expedition than three. Mentioning the same fact to Mrs. Burton, her presumption was that either David Hale or Bettina had included Marguerite in the invitation.

She was a little annoyed at first, preferring that one of the Camp Fire girls should have been selected as her companion rather than Marguerite Arnot. She could only suppose that Bettina and David Hale would wish to talk to each other the greater part

of the time during their second visit to Queen Marie Antoinette's secret garden. But apparently one could not be sure, as they had chosen to invite Marguerite.

She did not dislike the young French girl, she thought her both talented and pretty, but not especially interesting, so that with several hours of each other's society they might become bored.

Moreover, Mrs. Burton had selfishly wished to rest and dream in the old garden, since gardens are intended for rest and dreams. And one could manage to chaperon two such well behaved persons as Bettina and David and at the same time enjoy one's own thoughts.

But with Marguerite Arnot as her constant companion, Mrs. Burton beheld her dreams dissolving into futile conversation.

The following day when David Hale arrived, seeing Marguerite standing with Mrs. Burton and Bettina and evidently dressed to accompany them, naturally he expressed no surprise. He may even have been secretly pleased by the addition of Marguerite's society.

Never was there a lovelier spring after-

noon! And in no place in the world can the spring be more enchanting than in Paris and the country surrounding Paris.

Instead of a motor car, David Hale had secured the services of an old fashioned Paris cab for their expedition. He wished to make the drive to the Queen's garden a slow one, as it was not of great length.

First they drove through the town of Versailles. Then they entered the park near an avenue which led past the Little Trianon. They passed The Temple of Love, a charming little building formed of columns with a white cupola and a statue of the Cupid inside. Next they drove slowly about the hamlet, a cluster of little rustic houses near the Little Trianon, where Queen Marie Antoinette and her maids, dressed in linen costumes and straw hats, used to play at making butter and cheese.

Not far from the hamlet, David ordered the cab to halt, then he and Bettina led the way to search for the secret garden.

It was not so easy to find as they had both supposed. But it was Bettina who again first discovered the stone wall and

the little secret door inside it. This afternoon the walls of the garden were covered with trailing rose vines. Before the little secret door stood the old French gardener who had formerly eyed Bettina with such disfavor.

He was smiling this afternoon, however, and held the gate key in his hand.

As the four visitors entered the narrow passage one at a time, they felt themselves to have entered fairyland.

Inside no stone wall was now to be seen, only a high wall of roses with a low border of evergreens beneath.

A great variety of trees were in blossom. Swinging from the branches of one tree to another high overhead were garlands of roses.

It was a garden such as Titania, the Queen of the Fairies, would have chosen for her habitation.

Forgetting Marie Antoinette, for whom the garden had been originally created in the days before the unhappy Queen could have dreamed of the fate awaiting her, Mrs. Burton could think only of Shakespeare's beautiful play of "Midsummer

Night's Dream." In just such trees Ariel must have swung; through just such winding, sunlit, fragrant paths old Bottome, the donkey, must have wandered, his great ears hung with flowers.

During the first quarter of an hour, Mrs. Burton, the two girls and David Hale, accompanied by the French gardener wandered about the little garden together, their only conversation repeated exclamations of delight.

Then Mrs. Burton suggested that she would like to sit down for a few moments. The two girls could continue to walk with David Hale until one or the other grew tired.

A short time after, Marguerite Arnot came back alone and took a place beside the Camp Fire guardian.

They were occupying two rustic chairs under a Louisiana cypress tree for which the gardens of the Little Trianon are famous.

"Please don't make any attempt to talk to me, Mrs. Burton. I understand that you would prefer to enjoy the beauty about us in silence and I think I should also."

So at first Mrs. Burton made no effort to talk, having many things to occupy her thoughts beside her own personal concerns.

In the past few weeks it had appeared as if the peace o' the world, which was to be wrought out in France was again endangered, not only by Germany's bluster, but by a misunderstanding between France and the United States. But today the news in the papers was again reassuring. Mrs. Burton was thinking that perhaps after all the details of peace might be arranged before she sailed for England, when hearing an unexpected sound, she turned toward her companion. The sound had been a little like a hastily swallowed sob.

Marguerite Arnot's eyes were full of tears.

"I am sorry, Mrs. Burton," she apologized, "Really there isn't anything in the world that specially troubles me. I think it is the loveliness of this little garden that has made me emotional. I was thinking of a queer jumble of things, of the fact that the woman for whom this garden was created was executed, and then of myself, an odd combination I appreciate. I was recalling Miss Lord's kindness to me and

how much I have enjoyed the past weeks with her. And then I was sorry that the house in Versailles is soon to be closed and Miss Lord to return to southern France and her reclamation work. I confess I rather dread going back to my former life in Paris. As I have lost my old position it may be difficult for me to find enough sewing to keep me busy now that so many people are in mourning."

In a moment forgotten was the garden and the world struggle for peace as Mrs. Burton, womanlike, became absorbed in the individual personal problem of the girl beside her. Forgotten also was her own impression that Marguerite was not interesting and might therefore bore her.

Here was a girl who had her own way to make and was bravely setting about the task. There was no other human situation which interested Mrs. Burton one half so much, or gave her the same instinctive desire to be of service. And this was not only her instinct, but a part of her long Camp Fire training, first as a Camp Fire girl and later as a guardian.

"But you are not to trouble about your

future, Marguerite," she argued, although a few moments before no such idea had entered her mind. "For one thing you may always count on the fact that Aunt Patricia never under any possible circumstances deserts a friend. Besides, Bettina Graham has a plan in mind which she has suggested to me and concerning which she has written her mother. So far she has received no answer, but afterwards I know she wishes to talk of it with you. Do you see Bettina and Mr. Hale? I don't wish them to forget where to look for us."

A little farther along, near the labyrinth where Bettina had once lost her way during her first evening alone in the secret garden, Mrs. Burton and Marguerite at this instant saw the blue of Bettina's dress shining between the green leaves of the intervening foliage. Standing over her and looking down upon her was David Hale.

Mrs. Burton also became aware of the fact that Marguerite Arnot immediately colored and glanced away. Her sympathy of a few moments before was now doubled.

What a contrast the lives of the two girls offered, a contrast which Marguerite

Arnot could scarcely fail to appreciate, especially if she had allowed herself to feel attracted by the young American who had been so intimate a member of their household for the past weeks.

It was not that Bettina possessed merely the gifts of beauty and cleverness and a charming nature, Marguerite Arnot might also lay claim to these. But Bettina had wordly possessions as well, a distinguished father, a mother who was one of the most fascinating women in Washington, a younger brother—all adoring her. She had wealth also, perhaps not wealth as Americans regard it, but certainly what would have been a fortune to the young French girl.

David Hale was ambitious, never having hesitated to reveal his intention to fight his way to a foremost position. Between the two girls, if he should ever care for either one of them, how much more Bettina would have to offer him!

At the moment of Mrs. Burton's reflection, David Hale was talking with great earnestness to Bettina.

"Is it true that you may be leaving

Versailles in a few weeks, perhaps before the Peace Conference is finally ended?"

Bettina nodded.

"Yes, I am going to England with Captain and Mrs. Burton for a visit and then home. I am glad and sorry; there will never be so wonderful a time in my life as these weeks of the Peace Conference, and yet I have always wished to spend a summer in England."

"Aren't you sorry to say goodby except to France?" David Hale asked.

Again Bettina laughed.

"Why of course I am, sorry to say goodby to you. But I hope you mean to come to see us some day in Washington. At least you know my mother is lovely. And may I continue to wish you luck with your work here at the Peace Congress. I hope you are accomplishing all you hoped for and that some splendid new opportunity will come to you when this work is finished."

David Hale shook his head.

"No, I am not accomplishing everything I wish to accomplish." Then apparently without any connection with his former remark, he suddenly added:

"I wonder if you would mind telling me how old you are?"

Bettina colored slightly.

"I am eighteen. Is that old enough to begin hiding one's age? I wonder why you wish to know at present?"

"Can't you guess at least something of my reason? Perhaps I shall not wait to come to see you first in Washington. When the Peace Conference is ended I too shall have earned a holiday in England!"

Bettina had been looking for the past few moments down upon a bed of white fleur-de-lis, which were just opening into snow white blooms. Now she moved away a few steps.

"Suppose we go now and join the others. They may grow weary of waiting. Mrs. Burton will be interested to know we may see you again in England. But I shall always remember our meeting in this little garden. Thank you for bringing me here again now that the winter cold has gone and the early flowers are in bloom!"

At this moment the old French gardener, appearing in the path before Bettina and David, with a low bow presented Bettina with a bouquet.

Afterwards, as she came toward them, Mrs. Burton observed Marguerite Arnot's eyes travel from Bettina's flowers to a long study of the other girl's face.

CHAPTER XIX

L'Envoi to Glorious France

A SHORT time after, trunks were being brought down from the attic of the house at Versailles and being gradually packed. Other arrangements were also being made in a leisurely fashion for the closing of the house which Miss Patricia had rented only for a season.

She had grown impatient to return to her work in the devastated districts of France, for now that the war was over the appeal for food and other aid was growing more insistent than ever, and idleness, such as she felt the months at Versailles had represented, at no time really interested Miss Patricia Lord.

Captain Richard Burton had arrived in Versailles a week before and was compelled to leave for England within a short time on a special mission for the Red Cross.

The Camp Fire girls were therefore separating for the first time in many months,

since Vera Lagerloff and Alice Ashton were to accompany Miss Lord and continue the relief work in France, while the other girls were going with Captain and Mrs. Burton to spend the summer in England.

Apparently definite arrangements of some character had been made for each person who shared Miss Patricia's hospitality during the memorable spring in France, save the two members of her household, Marguerite Arnot and Julie Dupont and the new group of French Camp Fire girls, the little French midinettes, for whom Miss Patricia was acting as Camp Fire guardian and whom she apparently had taken under her special protection.

On this morning Marguerite Arnot and Julie Dupont were both at work in the big room which had been devoted to their use ever since their installation at the house in Versailles. At the same time they had continued their work they had received a generous recompense for their service, so that, as the two girls had been at no expense, they both possessed more money than at any previous time in their lives.

Julie was too young to do sewing of an

important character; at present she was engaged in pulling basting threads from an evening dress of Mrs. Burton's in which Marguerite Arnot had made a slight alteration.

She was frowning with her dark, heavy brows drawn close together and her lips puckered, yet in spite of her evident bad temper, she looked prettier and in better health than in a long time.

"I have something to tell you, Marguerite," she began, "although you need not offer me advice in return.

"Your friend, Miss Lord, invited me into her room last night and told me she would pay my expenses at a boarding school for the next two years if I chose to go. The school would not be an expensive one, as she had many other demands upon her fortune which she plainly considered more important. She also announced that I particularly required a discipline which I had never received. Did you know, Marguerite, that Miss Lord has also asked the group of girls with whom I used to live, her own French Camp Fire group, to go with her to work among the poor children

in the devastated country? They are to sew for the poor and help in any way possible in order that they may be trained perhaps as teachers for the home for orphan children which Miss Lord hopes at some future time to establish in France."

Marguerite Arnot stopped sewing for a moment.

"I trust you accepted Miss Lord's offer, Julie. You will probably never have another such opportunity in your life and Miss Patricia is right when she says you are in need of discipline. How little like a fairy godmother Miss Patricia looks and yet what wonderful things she does for everybody!"

"Yes, for everybody except you, Marguerite Arnot, and yet I once thought you were her favorite. If it were not for *you* I should accept Miss Lord's offer; I am not so stupid that I do not realize what even two years of education may do toward giving me a better start in life. Besides, I know my father would have wished me to accept; he was always insisting that I had no proper education without making the effort to see that I did have one. Really,

Marguerite, I think you might have done something for yourself, so that I should not have to worry over you.

In spite of Julie's absurdity, the older girl smiled and sighed almost in the same instant, since even so unreasonable an affection was not to be disregarded.

"I don't know just what remarkable future you think I should have worked out for myself in the past few months, Julie. Just the same I think I can continue to make my living without your sacrificing yourself. Perhaps with your cleverness and with Miss Patricia to help you by paying for your schooling you may turn out to be a famous woman some day and be able to care for me after all! I am not so clever as you are!"

Julie nodded.

"No, you are not, that is why I am so anxious for you to marry. You really need some one to look after you. It was for that reason I arranged for you to go to the Queen's secret garden. I have been hoping Mr. Hale would become more interested in you, but I'm afraid after all he prefers Miss Graham. You would have

liked him to care for you, wouldn't you, Marguerite?"

Julie's state of mind, her amazing candor were the attributes of a thoroughly untrained child, nevertheless Marguerite Arnot's long patience could endure no more.

"Never make a speech of that kind to me again as long as you live, Julie. But one thing I would like to understand. What do you mean by saying you arranged for me to go to the Queen's secret garden? Was I invited by Mrs. Burton, Bettina Graham, or Mr. Hale?"

Julie shrugged her little French shoulders.

"You were invited by no one of them, your invitation came from me. I simply pretended to you that you were asked, thinking you might make the best of the opportunity. But since you had an agreeable time and nothing happened I don't see the difference."

Annoyed by her older friend's manner Julie had begun her speech in anger, but at its conclusion she was also a little frightened.

Without replying Marguerite Arnot arose and left the room.

In Mrs. Burton's sitting-room, she was fortunate enough to discover both Mrs. Burton and Bettina Graham, who had been reading a letter together and discussing it.

"I am so glad it is you, Marguerite," Mrs. Burton declared, as Marguerite entered after knocking. "Bettina and I were just planning to send for you to ask if you would have a talk with us. I suppose you know that Aunt Patricia and I have been arguing as to whether you are to stay with her in France for the relief work or to come to England for the summer with me. But as a matter of fact Aunt Patricia really agrees with me and we both feel you have worked long enough for the time being and are in need of a real holiday. So first of all, will you come with us to England, Marguerite, as one of my Camp Fire girls? Afterwards, Bettina's mother, who is my dearest friend and the most charming woman in the world besides, wishes you to come to the United States if you like and first of all to her home in Washington. The opportunitites for your work ought to be better in the United States in the next few years than in France, and Mrs. Graham

will be able to give you a start in Washington and take care of you and be very grateful to you in the bargain."

"But Mrs Burton," Marguerite protested, a little overcome by so much generosity and such a bewildering number of opportunities, "you will be good enough to give me time to think over what you have proposed. Of course I know I shall love to go to England for the summer, but the United States seems so far away. What I really came down to see you for was to apologize; I did not know until a moment ago that no one of you invited me on your excursion to the Queen's garden the other afternoon. It was a wretched mistake and I'm sorry, I can't explain exactly what happened or why I thought I was asked without involving some one else."

"Then don't attempt it for goodness sake, Marguerite, because it was delightful to have you!" Bettina answered quickly, sympathizing with the other girl's embarrassment, although not understanding the situation.

"It was really a piece of good fortune,

wasn't it after all, Marguerite, a piece of good fortune for me, since it afforded me my only chance for a talk with you alone since our acquaintance?" Mrs. Burton added. "Now you two girls please go away and leave me, because I have some most important work to do. I must write Madame Clermont instructions and suggestions regarding the future of the Camp Fire organization in France."

Ten days later, accompanied by Marguerite Arnot and five of the American Camp Fire girls, Captain and Mrs. Burton sailed for England.

They were crossing from Boulogne to Folkestone on a late spring afternoon; it was toward the close of a warm and quiet day so that the water was still and blue.

On this passage the little channel steamer was largely filled by British officers and soldiers returning home after service in France.

As the boat pushed off from the French shore a farewell shout rang out from the people crowding the dock; from somewhere back in the old French town a Cathedral bell began chiming an evening hymn.

A British officer chanced to be standing beside Mrs. Burton, both of them leaning over the railing watching the receding line of shore.

"It has been a great adventure, Madame, a world adventure, this fighting for brotherhood in France. I see you are an American woman, yet whether or not one ever returns to these shores, the old axiom is now forever true, every one of us who has lived in France during the war will henceforward have two countries—his own and Glorious France!"

The officer, lifting his hand, saluted the French shore.

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